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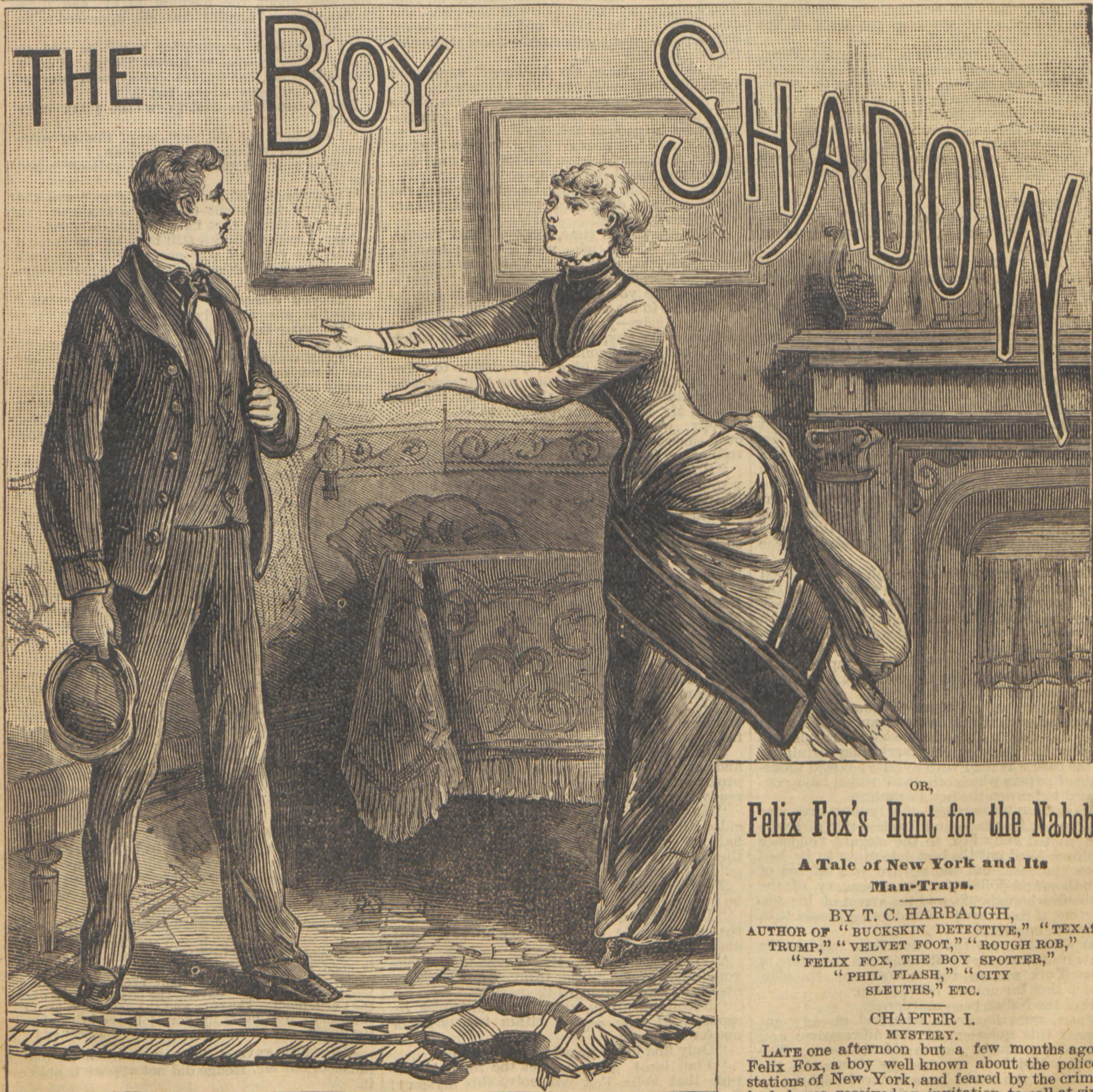
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OR,
Felix Fox's Hunt for the Nabob.

A Tale of New York and Its
Man-Traps.

BY T. C. HARBAUGH,
AUTHOR OF "BUCKSKIN DETECTIVE," "TEXAS
TRUMP," "VELVET FOOT," "ROUGH ROB,"
"FELIX FOX, THE BOY SPOTTER,"
"PHIL FLASH," "CITY
SLEUTHS," ETC.

CHAPTER I.
MYSTERY.

LATE one afternoon but a few months ago, Felix Fox, a boy well known about the police stations of New York, and feared by the criminal classes, received an invitation to call at six o'clock that evening at the up-town residence of Mark Morey, a prominent Broad street broker.

"YOU WILL NOT SAY 'NO.' YOU WILL UNDERTAKE THIS CASE—YOU WILL FIND HIM!" AND THE GIRL-WOMAN, WITH OUTSTRETCHED HANDS STOOD PLEADINGLY BEFORE THE BOY SHADOW.

"It can't be that the Nabob has turned up safely, and now wants me to run down the fellows who had to do with his disappearance," reflected the boy detective when he had mastered the note. "No, that can not be it, for this is a woman's writing, and the Nabob's fist never spread a word on this paper. I'll go and see what's in it, but I allow I don't want to be put to work on a case on which the best foxes have been at work for weeks."

At the hour mentioned in the invitation, Felix Fox rung the bell at the broker's house and was admitted to the sumptuously-furnished parlor with an alacrity which indicated that his arrival had been looked for.

"I guess the Nabob is still a missing quantity," murmured the shrewd boy while he waited to be confronted by the sender of the message. "It can't be that I've tumbled into a trap of any kind. I won't believe that."

He had hardly ceased when there was a rustle of feminine garments, and Felix saw a beautiful young woman enter the room.

"The Nabob's daughter!" he mentally exclaimed as he bowed to the new-comer whom he thought the most beautiful woman he had ever seen.

"You are Felix Fox, the boy detective?" she said, coming forward and looking closely into the boy's face as he stood in the light of the wonderful chandelier.

"I guess that's who I am," responded Felix. "They seem to know me pretty well in the city."

"I have heard often of you," was the reply.

"You're the boy who took that young Jerseyman, Omri Otway, from the clutches of those two rascals, Silas Sharp and Darius Dodge."

"That was more than a year ago, miss."

"Yet I have not forgotten it," said the young lady. "But I did not invite you here to say this."

"I suppose not."

"Mr. Morey has not been found," continued Felix's fair interviewer, "and I want you to take the trail."

While more than half suspecting something of this kind, the boy was startled by the speaker's bluntness.

He had already familiarized himself to some extent with the strange disappearance of Mark Morey, the rich broker, commonly called "the Nabob," by his acquaintances, and the newspaper reporters.

Three weeks had elapsed since the Nabob was last seen by any of his friends. He left his private office at the close of business hours, one afternoon, and entered a cab, as was his wont when he desired to be driven home leisurely. Since the closing of the carriage door upon the broker, no person of his acquaintance had seen him.

It was known that he had taken with him certain moneys amounting to several thousand dollars, but not sufficient to tempt the thugs and secret villains who play for high stakes in the great city.

This disappearance was enough to afford food for gossip. In a certain sense he was one of the best known men in New York. Everybody knew the Nabob; he was handsome, forty-five, a widower, was always dressed well, and was lavish with his money.

If the mayor had mysteriously disappeared as had Mark Morey, there would not have been more comment.

The papers had all discussed the strange events connected with the broker's disappearance, day after day they told the interested thousands that no clew had been found. Everything pertaining to the case was read with avidity; it sold thousands of papers which otherwise would have continued to burden the news counters.

Mark Morey's partner—the broker firm was "Morey & Marx"—and Estelle—the girl who had invited Felix Fox to the elegant residence up-town—had put the best detectives to be had upon the case, and the reward was offered of five thousand dollars for the discovery of the Nabob's whereabouts, and the arrest of his abductors, if the theory of abduction should turn out to be correct.

It is safe to say that when Felix went to the Nabob's house every policeman and detective in New York was on the lookout for the clew which thus far nobody could grasp.

Had the Nabob been murdered?

There were hundreds who had already answered this question in the affirmative, and several prominent papers did the same. The morgue had been watched by thousands; the waters of the docks were scoured nightly by lynx-eyed people in boats, but the mystery of the disappearance remained as deep as ever.

Felix Fox had no exaggerated opinion of his

qualities as a detective; he was but a stout boy of seventeen with a good figure, quick as a cat, and a keen eye. He had grown up almost among the detectives of the metropolis; and he knew the dark streets and alleys of the city as the messenger boy knows the great thoroughfares.

As we have said, he was surprised when the young lady told him that she had sent for him to take a hand in this mysterious case that had startled the whole city.

"Don't you overrate my ability, miss?" asked Felix.

"I am sure I do not," was the quick reply. "I want you to do what you can to find him."

"Then you don't believe—"

The boy checked himself.

"No," said the young woman, "I do not believe he has been murdered; still," in a lower tone, "one does not know what the bad men of New York will not do. I do not believe the wild stories afloat to the effect that he was lured off by a beautiful woman who lives out of the city. These stories are cruelties; they deeply hurt me who know him so well. There is a diabolical plot of some kind; he has fallen into the clutches of some people who are playing a deep game. I have the utmost confidence in you. You will not say 'no.' You will undertake this case—you will find him!" and the girl-woman, with outstretched hands stood pleadingly before the Boy Shadow.

"I will, or leave the business!" exclaimed Felix, his dark eyes becoming animated. "At this moment I haven't the slightest idea where the Nabob is, but I will find a clew, or join the wharf rat brigade at half pay!"

The young lady seemed about to seize the boy for joy, and might have done so if a man had not entered the parlor unannounced.

Felix saw him first and the quick eyes of the boy thought he detected a lurking flash of hate when their gaze met.

"You are just in time, Rogers," said Estelle, facing the visitor, who was a young man of thirty, of rather dark complexion, with a smooth face and piercing eyes, almost black. "This is Mr. Fox, the young detective who has won so much fame in his calling."

"Felix, miss—just Felix Fox; no mister in his!" said the boy, blushing slightly, at which Estelle smiled and continued:

"I sent for him to give him a chance to solve this terrible mystery. Felix, as you object to the prefix 'Mr.' this gentleman is Mr. Rogers Marx, Mr. Morey's business partner."

Felix, who had been looking at the visitor ever since his entrance, executed the usual introductory bow, and said under his breath:

"Rogers Marx, eh? This is the fellow who wants to be Mark Morey's son-in-law, as well as his partner! Well, that's p'int No. 1, or I'm a saw dust operator!"

"Do you think you can strike the trail?" asked Marx, still eying Felix with much intensity.

"He says he will!" exclaimed Estelle, before the young spotter could reply.

"I will say that you have the biggest contract ahead you ever undertook," continued Marx. "At the end of a successful trail lies five thousand dollars, young man. You begin where the best detectives of the country leave off. I shall compliment you highly if you should solve this unpleasant affair."

"I am sure he will!" cried Estelle, springing to the boy's side, and seizing his hand. "Remember! I have your word that you will not fail."

"And fail I will not!" echoed Felix firmly, and as he spoke he looked into the young broker's face and caught the sneer that was already half-formed on his lips.

"No, you don't like me, Rogers Marx," decided the boy spotter. "I can see that with half an eye, and I am ready to tell you that there's not a grain of love lost—not if I know gold from pewter."

Then he turned to Estelle, and told her that he must be off.

"I will let you out," said the young lady, and the next moment the pair were in the hallway and at the front door.

"You must not let Mr. Marx discourage you," said Estelle, as she threw a quick glance over her shoulder toward the parlor.

"Nothing shall do that," was the quick response. "I may report within two days, or not for two weeks."

"Only find him," urged the young lady.

"Find him? You can bet the Nabob's fortune that Felix Fox will solve this mystery! Good-night!"

He was on the street again and a moment later was hurrying away.

"I've got no easy case on my hands this time," muttered the Boy Shadow. "The lady back there has given me a puzzle that has baffled the best—Shrewd Simpson among them. But my word is out that I will not fail, and I must not. By Jupiter! I believe I would have promised that girl anything. So I am after the Nabob at last! In less than forty-eight hours I will have somebody after me."

In less than forty-eight hours?

Not far behind the boy walked a man whose step was springy and almost noiseless. There were a number of pedestrians on the sidewalk, but this particular one kept a certain distance between Felix and himself, and his eyes watched him like the eyes of a lynx.

The Boy Shadow had a foe at his heels already.

CHAPTER II.

AN ADROIT RASCAL.

WHEN Felix reached his lodgings, which were on the second floor of a plain-looking house on the Bowery near Bayard street, he was surprised to find a man waiting for him.

There was nothing about this person that at first attracted the young shadower's attention. He was about the medium height, had light brown eyes and a full beard, and appeared to be about forty years of age.

"I have been waiting for you," he said to Felix. "My name is Harris Hodge. I don't live in the city, but in New Jersey near Morristown, if you know where that is."

Felix nodded; he well knew the place mentioned.

"I am here for the purpose of finding some stolen property," continued the man.

"Have you consulted with the police?" asked the boy.

"I have not, and I don't intend to," was the reply. "I don't want to make a hue and cry over a few things that have but little intrinsic value. I believe that a still hunt by one shrewd person like yourself will accomplish more than a chase by half a dozen policemen. Shall I state my case?"

"If you want to," responded Felix, "but I cannot promise beforehand to take it up."

"Got your hands full, eh?"

"Yes. Just now I have an important case."

"I can make mine very important to you," the Jerseyman assured, quickly. "All the money in the country is not on Manhattan Island. We have our share of the chink in Jersey, and some of us are pretty well fixed, too," and the man twisted his lips into a smile and winked at Felix.

"Go on; I will hear your story," and the young shadower spoke decisively.

"I live with my mother, a widow lady near Morristown," began Mr. Hodge. "Our only help has been a young man named Benjamin Bloss, who attended to the horses and looked after the fires and so forth. On the night of the tenth, which is just two weeks ago, a trunk was broken open in my mother's room, and some very valuable articles taken out. I was not at home that night, being in Trenton, whither I was decoyed by a letter, which I am sorry I forgot to bring with me to the city. My mother was drugged by the thief, who entered at a window, and the robbery was committed. Our authorities failed to find any clew, but I have been a little more successful."

"Two days after the robbery our hand, Benjamin Bloss, disappeared suddenly, and I afterward learned that he went to Morristown, and bought a ticket for New York. I expect you will say that it is not much use to hunt for one man among nearly two millions of people. I admit that it looks like foolishness, but that man must be found. I discovered in his room some pieces of paper which, when I had put them together, turned out to be a letter which he had lately received from a certain party here. I have not the letter with me, but I can repeat it word for word. Do you want it?"

"Go on," said Felix.

"It ran thus," continued Harris Hodge:

"NEW YORK, June 7th. —"

"Why don't you hurry up the job? The market is good now, and the goods will command a fine price. The Broad street 'find' promises to return big results in a few days. The city is getting over the excitement. The cops and the detectives are off the scent. Now hurry up your job, and bring along the goods."

NOSGAY."

Felix Fox gave a slight start when the man finished, but Mr. Hodge did not appear to notice it.

"That is the exact reading of the letter which Benjamin Bloss got several days before the robbery at our house," he said. "There was a

gold watch and some money in the trunk, but they were not touched. The missing objects consist of an old-fashioned gold locket, that contained a miniature, and a packet of very important papers. These papers prove my mother's claim to a large estate in Scotland, which claim is disputed by certain parties over there. I believe that those papers are 'the goods' spoken of in the letter; but about the Broad street find mentioned, I know nothing, although I believe I have read something about a missing Broad street broker called the Nabob."

"There is such a person missing," said Felix, "but I can't connect his disappearance with the robbery at your house."

"Nor I, only if the 'Broad street find' refers to him, the person who planned our robbery knows something about the case."

"Mr. Hodge, you ought to be a detective!" exclaimed Felix, with a smile.

"I want to get away from New York as soon as I can," was the answer. "Won't you help me a little with my case? Find out for me, if you can, who this 'Nosegay' is, and I'll see that you're well paid. The letter was written in a cramped hand, as if an old man handled the pen. A man in Norristown said it looked like it was written by a Jew."

"A Jew, and signed 'Nosegay'?" ejaculated Felix.

"Yes," answered Hodge, with a smile.

The boy detective was silent for a minute, during which time the eyes of the Jerseyan watched him narrowly.

"I will try to do something for you," he said at last. "If you will come here to-morrow night at seven, I will report."

"That's business!" cried Harris Hodge. "You shall never have cause to regret the assistance you render me in this case. How much do you want in advance?" And he thrust one hand into his pantaloons pocket as if about to produce a pocketbook.

"Not a cent," said Felix. "I don't work that way."

"Then I will increase the reward we have offered for the stolen papers, which was two hundred dollars. The man who pronounced the writer of that letter a Jew says he can describe people by their writing. He says that Benjamin Bloss's correspondent is an old Jew, who has the look of an adroit rascal, and that he is crippled in the hand that holds his pen. But there may be hundreds of such people in this city. Give 'Nosegay' a chase, anyhow, and I'll be here to-morrow night at seven, sharp, to hear your report."

"I'll do my best. I always do that," replied Felix, with a smile, and the next moment he had dismissed his visitor and was alone.

"What lucky fortune is this?" he exclaimed, almost before Harris Hodge had reached the sidewalk below. "Here comes a man from New Jersey, and in telling me about a robbery in the interior of that State, gives me what may be a clue to the missing Nabob! Jehosaphat! this is luck! The letter undoubtedly referred to Mark Morey when it mentioned the Broad street find. That affair has baffled the police and the detectives, and the excitement has cooled down just as the letter says. And 'Nosegay' is said to be an old Jew with a crippled hand. I know such a person, and of all men in New York, he is the one to engage in dark work. I don't care much about the missing locket and papers. I want to get at the bottom of this Broad street mystery, and I must not forget that I promised Estelle Morey to get there."

Felix remained in his room, and did not follow Harris Hodge down upon the street.

There was a gleam akin to victory in the Jerseyan's eyes, and his steps were quick and light as he hurried away.

Suddenly about two squares from Felix's lodgings he was met by a man whom he recognized, with a laugh.

"What luck, Harris?" asked this person of the boy's visitor.

"I think I've put him on the trail," was the reply. "He reports to me to-morrow night at seven, at his room."

"We will see about that," was the reply. "What kind of a lay did you give him?"

"I told him about the robbery at our house, near Morristown, Jersey; that we had a hand who got a letter from New York signed 'Nosegay,' which letter an expert says was written by a Jew with a crippled hand. I saw his eyes leap when I gave him that lay. And in order to fasten the matter I repeated the letter, and got into it a hint about the Nabob. I did it well, too, Larry. I fixed the whole thing up in his room before he dropped in."

"He didn't suspicion?"

"That I wasn't Harris Hodge from Jersey? Not a bit of it. For once the sharpest boy in New York has been completely hoodwinked. We'll go down and post Moses. He may drop in yet to-night."

The two men hurried along together.

In a little while they turned into Baxter street, and found themselves among the Jewish clothing stores that for several squares line the western side of that thoroughfare.

The Jew shops of Baxter street open early and close late; and the two men brought up against more than one son of Abraham as they ran the gantlet.

At last they dodged into one of the many clothing shops, and passed to the back part of the store before they accosted anybody.

"Vat is it, my fr'ents?" said a Jew of about sixty, who suddenly made his appearance as if he had come up through the floor.

"Talk to him, Harris," said one of the men in a whisper as he turned back. "You know how to deal with this night-hawk."

"See here, Moses; we've got business for you," said Harris Hodge, looking sternly at the old Jew. "Your store may be visited yet to-night by a boy who is looking after the gold pigeon of Broad street."

"Veeping Rachel!" exclaimed the Jew, starting back.

"It will be worse than that if he gets on to you," said the man, who seemed to enjoy the Jew's fright with an inward pleasure.

"I will shut my shop at once, an' s'help me gracious—"

"You will leave this shop open!" interrupted Harris Hodge, with an air of authority. "That boy will come like a customer perhaps; you may even sell him a suit. You must get him into your back-room and then you must touch the button. Do you understand, Moses?"

"Ven am I ter haf rest? I sleep mit mine eyes open every night, und I hear—"

"You'll hear the click of a sheriff's trap if that boy succeeds!" hissed Hodge.

"Who sends him here?" gasped the Jew.

"I do! A young woman put him on a certain trail to-night. If he wins, woe to us; if he fails, we're rich!"

CHAPTER III.

THE JEW'S CUSTOMER.

THE eyes of Moses Meek, the Jew, seemed about to start from his head when Harris Hodge turned on his heel and walked toward the front of the store where his companions awaited him.

"Look a-here, my fr'ent. Tink uf my vife an' childrent," said Moses, following the stern man up, his face as white as his future shroud. "Can't ve git along mitout touchin' der button on dat poy?"

"Try it if you want to," said Hodge, coldly, over his shoulder, and then he turned full upon the Jew. "If you want to feel a rope tighten under your chin, try it, I say. Just let that young spotter alone and enjoy the consequences."

"Spotter, eh?" ejaculated Moses.

"That's what I said, if my memory serves me well," was the reply.

"Ven vill he come?"

"He's liable to drop in at any minute. You'll have to keep a sharp lookout, for there's no telling how or when he'll come. Now, sir, do your duty, and Moses Meek will continue to serve Mammon and the devil on Baxter street."

A moment later Hodge joined his companion, with a chuckle, and the detestable pair of first-class villains walked from the shop.

"I wish I could plot out der day I got acquainted mit dose men," murmured the Jew. "Veeping Rachel! but dey gifs me more trouble den all mine business. Dey haf got dere thumbs on me an' I moost do dere bidding. Father Apraham! is dere no vay for Moses Meek to escape?"

The Baxter street Jew went to the rear of the store room and opened a door which led into a small room not over seven feet square. It was dimly lighted by a lamp that occupied one of many shelves filled with valises, old clothes and unsalable goods of many descriptions. The dust of months, if not of years, lay thick upon them and moths had corrupted all that was corruptible.

A thorough inventory of that little room at the time of which we write would have revealed some odd articles, for at the back of a number of shelves were goods for which detectives and police had looked everywhere save in the right place.

Moses Meek might do a legitimate business as a clothier, but he had taken into his store goods

that were not his own, and some articles for which blood had been shed.

The old Jew on the night in question shut the door of his treasure-room softly yet tightly behind him, and took down the lamp. Moving toward the further side of the apartment he examined a dark little object that looked like the head of a large nail that had been driven into the wall.

The examination seemed to satisfy him.

"I haf ter do it. If I don't he says I vill hear der click of a sheriff's trap, an' my gracious! I don't vant ter hear dat. If der poy succeeds ve'll be poor; if he fails, rich! As dat is der case, he vill fail!"

The Jew spoke the last sentence in determined tones as if the money consideration involved in the affair had decided him, and it probably had.

He put the lamp on the shelf and went back into the store-room. His family lived in the rooms above the shop, and he could hear several children romping overhead.

He walked to the front door, but Harris Hodge and his companion had disappeared. Baxter street had its usual gaslight pedestrians, and Moses eyed the younger ones closely, for he was watching for the boy who was expected to come to the trap.

"Hasn't he got around yet?" asked a voice so near the Jew that he started back as if a pair of handcuffs had snapped at his wrists.

"Who dere you mean, my fr'ent?" he asked, and then he saw that he was confronted by Harris Hodge, but minus the full black beard worn by him during his visit to Felix Fox's quarters. "Oh, ish it you? No, he has not come, an' I wish ter gracious he'd git run over by a hack or kilt some other vay before he comes."

"No such interference like that, Moses, my Judean seraph," laughed Hodge. "The boy may be a little slow, but he will come. I put a suspicious lug in his ear a while ago, and don't you forget it, Moses."

"I haf been lookin' at all der young snipes vat pass, but no poy come in yet."

"When he comes you want to do your duty. Remember! if he wins, woe to us; if he fails, we are rich."

"How rich?" asked Moses.

"Nearly as rich as we want to be."

"Rich enough ter puy der Prooklyn Pridge?" grinned the Jew.

"Blamed near it," was the reply, and Hodge looked serious as he spoke. "The keeping of that boy allows us to play the other big game through. Moses, he is capable of taking up the trail where the best spotters of New York have quit disgusted, and of following it to the end."

"Dot poy?"

"Felix Fox, the Boy Shadower of New York, the same Nemesis who hunted down your friends, Silas Sharp and Darius Dodge, a few months ago."

The Baxter street sheeny recoiled as if the boy spotter in person had touched him.

"Den, py Heavens! I owe him von!" he exclaimed through close-shut teeth. "Harris, my fr'ent, go und hunt him up; pring him here an' let Moses Meek avenge der death uf his fr'ents. Vere is der young spotter now?"

"On his way here, I hope. But here is a customer."

The Jew did not have many customers after sundown, but as Harris Hodge spoke a man stopped among the various articles of wearing apparel displayed on the sidewalk and commenced to examine a pair of pantaloons.

Leaving Hodge, the Jew bounded toward the man and fastened on him in an instant.

"Good evenink, my fr'ent," smiled Moses. "Vas you looking for a nice pair of bants? Vat you tink of dose, eh?" And the Jew lifted one leg of the garment and held it admiringly before the man's vision. "Dose bants cost me eleven tollar. I sell 'em to you for five an' a halluf. Step in an' I will wrap dose bants up for you."

"What's your stock inside?" asked the man, glancing into the store, which was one mass of cheap clothing.

"Der pest in der city!" exclaimed Moses, catching the man's arm and almost dragging him forward. "I kin fit you out in a suit good enough ter call on der mayor in, an' too cheap to talk about."

In calmer moments Moses might have been struck by the willingness of this stranger to be dragged into his store, but now he was so excited over the prospects of a sale that he took note of nothing else.

"A sucker has swum into Moses's net sure enough," said Harris Hodge, ere he glided away and left the Jew to scale his catch in the usual manner.

Moses did not see the rascal move off; he saw nothing but the sweeping profits on a pair of pants, if not on a whole suit.

The customer was a person apparently about thirty-five years old. His figure, which was slightly above the usual height, was well built; his breadth of shoulders indicated great strength, his movements agility, and his eyes, which were black, keenness and bravery.

He was not overly well dressed, and Moses was ready to declare that he needed a whole suit.

"Now, my fr'ent, here is clothes fit for der gods," exclaimed the Jew, waving his hand, which had one missing finger, at the contents of counters and shelves. "I vill proceed ter sell you a pair of bants or a suit vat vill excite der millionaires of Broad and Wall. Take off dat coat and try on dis. It stood me at dirty tollar. May I die in my ped to-night, if it didn't! but as it is you vot wants it, I vill let it go, with bants an' vest, at eighteen, ef I go to der boor-house to-morrow."

If the customer had not offered resistance, Moses would have divested him of his coat in a moment.

"See here! I don't propose to be stripped like a convict!" flashed the man. "I didn't come here to be crowded into a moth-nest."

"Moth, my fr'ent! Weeping Rachel, my son Isaac bought der goods and examined 'em before dey let der London house. Dis bootiful coat vas made for you."

"Moses Meek," said the man, and his hand fell upon the Jew's arm and tightened there. "Who was that man in front of your store when I came up?"

The Baxter street clothier suddenly grew a trifle paler.

"Vat man?" he asked.

"You know! Wasn't it Harris Hotspur for the present, Harris Hodge?"

"Grave of Joseph, no!" cried Moses. "Dat man keeps a grocery on Grand street."

The customer laughed, and his dark eyes twinkled, but the gleam of merriment soon faded.

"That fellow was Harris Hotspur and you know it," he said, solemnly. "Moses, I want to see you privately a minute. Let's go into your little room."

"I haf none. My store is my office!"

"Do you want me to throw you through the door of that little room which begins at the end of this?" was the retort. "I am one of these men who are not to be trifled with. Will you go peaceably, Moses, or shall I take you to the room?"

"I vill go," said the Jew, meekly.

The two men moved down the narrow aisle between the counters, and although the stranger released Moses's arm, his eyes appeared to look him through.

Moses feared the man, but all at once his eyes flashed as if for joy.

Did he think of the button in the wall?

Without a word he led the way to the treasure room and the two walked in.

"Now, my fr'ent, vat is it?" asked the Jew.

"Simply this: I want the hiding-place of Mark Morey, the Broad street Nabob! I am a man-hunter. I am Shrewd Simpson!"

A terrible cry rose from the Jew's lips; he fairly staggered to the wall.

"Keep your hands down!" said the unmasked man, coolly. "If you lift them to touch the infamous button above your head, I'll give the coroner a job!"

CHAPTER IV.

FELIX ON THE TRAIL.

PERHAPS the terrified Jew wondered at this moment why the man instead of the boy had come. He had been told to look out for Felix Fox, and Harris Hodge had not said a word about this cool fellow who called himself Shrewd Simpson.

It was a confrontation totally unlooked for, and Moses Meek seemed to have lost his breath while he leaned in fright against the wall.

Shrewd Simpson! He had heard the name before, but he had never seen its owner.

Moses was one of the most notorious "fences" who inhabited that quarter of the city, and it was his duty to keep posted on the police and detectives, but here was one who stood in his treasure-room and a man who knew about the button in the wall and about the mystery of the Broad street broker.

It was some moments before the Jew found his tongue after the visitor's last words.

"Vat do I know about dot Broad street man? Noding! 'pon my birthright, Meester Simpson, I knows nodings apout him. I am only a poor

Jew vat sells clodings to keep his little family from de boor-house, an'—"

"I can't stand here and listen to lies like that," interrupted Shrewd Simpson. "A poor and honest Jew doesn't have a fellow like Harris Hotspur about his establishment. I have never failed on a trail. I have the dead wood on the gang that worked the Broad street lay. Come, Moses, play fair and save your neck."

"I know nodings," persisted Moses. "I can prove py my wife Sarah dot I knows nodings about dot Broad street panker. Sarah!"

He called his wife before Shrewd Simpson could interfere, and the next moment there were feet on the stairs that led upward to the little room.

The detective's countenance showed that he did not want to be interfered with by a woman just at that time, but he saw that it was one of the unpreventable events, and he was forced to abide by it.

In a minute the little stair-door was burst open, and a veritable giantess made her appearance.

"Sarah, dot man says I know apout der Broad street panker vot is missing," said Moses instantly appealing to his wife as he pointed at the detective.

"Do you?" flashed the Jewess, and despite her bulk, she cleared the two last steps at a single bound and came toward Shrewd Simpson like a springing tigress.

The New York detective involuntarily recoiled; there was something both dangerous and ferocious about that woman.

"Make him take dot pack, Sarah," cried the Jew. "He would send us all to der prison, or der boor-house."

"Keep off!" cried Simpson who had backed to the wall. "I didn't expect to encounter a pythonesse, but by the eternal! I will show no mercy if I am touched."

He raised his hands in self-defense, but they were knocked down by the fury that confronted him, and the wife of Moses Meek was upon him before he could throw her off.

"Dot ish right! Shoke der spy!" cried the Jew as he bounded to the woman's assistance, and between the twain transformed into perfect furies, Shrewd Simpson was pressed against the wall until he was ready to believe that he had walked into a den of lions.

He struggled with all his might, but the infuriated pair were too much for him.

"Vat he say now, Sarah?" exclaimed the Jew looking into the flashing eyes of his wife.

"Nodings, Moses. Mebbe dish man pe's dead!"

A sudden pallor overspread the Jew's face. Sarah the tigress took her clinched hands with difficulty from Shrewd Simpson's throat, and got up.

Moses took the lamp from its shelf and held it with trembling hand over the human body that filled one corner of the room.

"Feel his pulse, Sarah?" he said in a whisper.

The woman got down and placed her finger at the detective's wrist.

"It is dere yet, Moses, but very feeble," she said looking up into the scared and anxious face of her husband.

"Shall ve revive him?"

"And go to Sing Sing? No!" was the response spoken without a second's hesitation. "He knows too much. Go out and watch the store."

"Vot you do?" asked the Jew as he hesitated.

"Go and watch the store!" repeated the woman. "Vat if somepody comes in who pe's on dere lookout for Shrewd Simpson? Moses, py der grave of Joseph, ve are in der shadow of de gallows!"

That declaration was enough to start the Jew, and a moment later he was in the store-room and among his motley array of goods.

Composing himself as well as he could, he walked to the fror' of the room and halted at the door.

"Dot poy isn't goin' ter come. I don't vant him to drop in now," he said to himself. "Ven he does come—"

Moses stopped suddenly, for a man had stopped before him.

This person was well dressed and sported a short, full beard and green goggles.

Moses seemed to recognize him at once, for his eyes gleamed with a strange light.

"Look here," said the stranger in a whisper, which could be heard several feet from where the pair stood. "I want to tell you that a shrewd boy called Felix Fox has taken the trail of the Broad street mystery, and you have to look sharp if you don't want him to win the game. If we can hold out a few days longer

we'll get all we're playing for. Remember! look out for that boy. He is the shrewdest fox in this city."

The speaker's hand fell from the Jew's arm and he was gone in a moment.

"I knows you, Meester Marx," ejaculated Moses, following the retreating figure with his eye. "You are Mark Morey's bartner, an' you plays a pig game. Ven it ish all over I vill have a holdt on you, an' may I never see Cherusalem, if I don't pull der strings mighty often!"

Moses went back toward the little room and at the same time a boy rose from behind a counter laden with goods and bounded into the street!

"Can that really be Rogers Marx, the Nabob's partner?" exclaimed the boy. "I met him a short time ago with Estelle in her parlor. He is playing a deep game as the old Jew says, and I will find out what becomes of him. Rogers Marx in beard and goggles! That is a new transformation for the Nabob's partner, but I'll bet my head that it means more deep devilment than one can shake his finger at."

The boy, as the reader can easily guess, was Felix Fox, and he lost no time in spotting the man who had just left the Jew's shop.

If he had known what was transpiring at that moment in a certain part of that building, he might not have followed the man in goggles with so much avidity.

He led Felix a long chase, for he did not stop until he was in Broad street.

"He's going to the office," said the boy to himself. "I'm going to know what takes Rogers Marx there this time of night."

Sure enough, when the boy spotted came to a halt it was before a large building, between two of the second-story windows of which a little sign in gilt lettering bore the words:

"MOREY & MARXE,
PRIVATE BROKERS."

"Just as I expected!" exclaimed Felix, as the man whom he had followed dodged into an open hallway. "If I am not mistaken, I am getting onto a clew that has bothered the best of the boys."

Morey & Marx had their office on the second floor. The business which they carried on there had been established by the Nabob's father, and he had left it to his son, who had increased the fame and riches of the house.

Rogers Marx, the junior member, was shrewd in financial matters, and cunning in all things. It was said that he was the accepted suitor of Estelle, and that the wedding had been postponed by the mysterious disappearance of the Nabob.

Be this as it may, the man was acting very strangely for an honest person. He would have started if he had seen Felix Fox at his heels.

The boy did not enter the hallway until a light in one of the upper windows told him that the brokers' office was occupied. Then he entered the building and crept softly up the steps.

As he knew exactly where to find the office door he proceeded directly to it on tip-toe. It was locked, as he expected to find it. The boy halted at the door, and glanced up at the transom.

"I've got to see what is going on in there," he murmured. "I did not follow you for nothing, Rogers Marx."

With a boy like Felix there were no obstacles that could not be overcome.

He was the only person in the dimly lighted corridor which was as still as death. He went to work at once.

By standing on his toes he could grasp the top of the door frame, and clutching it firmly, he drew his body up until his eyes were above the bottom of the transom.

It was a stirring moment for the boy spy.

Almost at the same time a man came up the stairs a few yards away. He mastered step by step with a stealthiness which showed that he was bent on mischief.

Felix meanwhile was looking into the broker's office by means of the transom. His body was hanging along the door, and the sharp edge of the frame was cutting his fingers; but he had grated his teeth in a resolve to stand it out, so intent was he on the trail he thought he had struck.

He saw Roger Marx stooping before a large office safe which he had just opened. The man had discarded the goggles, but still wore the beard.

Felix saw him take from the safe a packet of papers, which he concealed in an inner pocket.

of his coat; then he shut the heavy steel door and made the combination secure once more.

The eyes of the boy spotter gleamed with triumph at this discovery; he was ready to let his hold slip and to drop back to the floor.

The gas-jet that burned all night in the corridor showed Felix hanging along the door. It revealed him to a man who came upon the scene suddenly and without noise.

This night-prowler was in his stocking-feet. He was well built and active as a cat. His teeth met suddenly as he came toward Felix like a shadow gliding over the wall. His noiseless strides were panther-leaps.

All at once one of his hands darted at the boy clinging to the door-frame, and the next half-second Felix was in his clutches.

A low cry rose from the boy's lips; it was a cry he could not help. The man jerked him down, but he did not have to. The sinking clutch had loosened Felix's hands.

"Here, captain, in there!" said the spotter's captor, striking the door with one hand, and then for the first time Felix saw the fellow's face.

It was one he did not recognize, but the eyes looked familiar perhaps in their ferociousness only.

A moment after the knock somebody on the inside came toward the door, and the lock clicked.

Felix crossed the threshold in the clutches of his captor, the door shut behind him with the musical snap of a spring catch.

"This night-weasel was hanging along the door," said the man, addressing Roger Marx, who had donned the green goggles again. "If you don't know him, I do. It is Felix Fox, the Boy Shadower of New York."

The broker uttered a cry.

"There is danger while he lives," the man went on.

"Then he must die!" said the Nabob's partner.

CHAPTER V.

THE SECRET TUNNEL.

It is the same night. The hour is half-past eleven o'clock, and the clothing shops along Baxter street greet the late passers by with closed doors; their queer owners, the Moseses, Abrahams and Solomons of Jewry have counted the gains of the day and gone to bed.

Here and there an all-night drinking shop is open, and the frequenters of that disreputable quarter of New York indulge in their late amusements, cards and liquor.

The clock of a certain saloon known everywhere by the sententious name of "Jacob's," indicates the exact time mentioned above, and a man comes in.

This person is not unknown to the portly individual behind the bar, for both nod slightly as their eyes meet.

"Jacob's" is three doors from Moses Meek's, and not far from an alley. Nobody can tell how this saloon got sandwiched between two clothing stores, but there it is as the police know, and Jacob, the proprietor, sells beer, while his neighbors sell suits.

The man who came in at half-past eleven, walked through the saloon and left it by a back door.

He found himself in a small hall which was very dimly lighted by a gas jet that smoked the wall. At one end of this hall was a closet, which the man opened with a key which he took from his pocket.

He entered the dark place and shut the door behind him. It closed with a snap.

Stooping down, he found an iron ring in the floor which he caught and twisted from left to right, then he pulled upward and opened a trap. If he had held a match in his hand, he might have seen a flight of steps, but he evidently knew they were there.

A moment later he descended into the darkness, letting the door down over him.

If he counted the steps, he must have found that they numbered seven. When he reached the bottom he stood on damp ground, and near a wall which he touched with his elbow.

"I don't want any light to guide me," said this man, addressing himself in audible tones. "I've been here before and I know just where to go. There's precious few places I don't know in this city, big as it is, but I never come to this one unless I've got work on my hands."

He moved forward down a narrow way which was not wide enough to admit of two persons walking abreast. The width was not uniform either, as if it was a tunnel hastily constructed.

The man did not remain long in this subter-

anean passageway, for he soon found another flight of steps, and, from the top one, knocked against a wooden covering.

In a little while a response came, and a trap-door was opened, revealing an old man, Jewish in cast, holding a lamp in his hand.

"Py der fleece of Gideon! Meester Harris, is dot you?" was the sentence that greeted the man underground.

"It is nobody else, Moses," he cried, emerging from the place and shutting the trap himself. "What has happened? You look as if you had seen your father's ghost."

"Shelp me gracious, I vish I had seen him!" said the Jew, who was our old friend Moses Meek. "Vare ish dot poy?"

"Didn't he come?"

"No; but a man did."

"Who was he?"

"Meester Harris, you know dot man vat was lookin' at dose bants ven you vent away?"

"Yes."

"He wasn't vat he represented. Dot mans, Meester Harris," and the Jew spoke very slowly, "dot mans, I say, was worse dan dot poy."

"What?"

"Dot vas Shrewd Simpson."

Harris Hodge started back with an oath on his lips.

"Shrewd Simpson, the independent detective?" he exclaimed. "See here, Moses, what are you giving me?"

The old Jew raised his hand solemnly and repeated his declaration.

"What did he want?" asked the rascal.

"Dot Broad street man."

"The Nabob?"

"Yes."

"How on earth did Shrewd Simpson find this trail?" ejaculated Harris Hodge.

"He ish sharper than dot poy."

"Not sharper. He can't be that," was the reply. "He has the faculty of stumbling onto trails. Where is he now? You did not let him get away after he told you what he was after?"

A smile stole over the sallow and oily face of the Jew, and Harris Hodge saw his deep-set little eyes twinkle in the light of the lamp he held.

"Aha! I see that he did not get away!" continued Hodge, who knew how to read by expression.

"What tells you this, Meester Hodge?"

"Your eyes," laughed the man. "Where is he?"

The Jew went to the stairway that led up from the little apartment to which he had admitted Harris Hodge and opened the door.

On the board he struck his bony knuckles, and called "Sarah!" in a low voice.

The answer came in the appearance of a woman who weighed nearly three hundred pounds, and the moment she caught sight of Hodge her eyes lit up with the light of some infernal triumph.

"Dot womans is worth her weight in gold," said the Jew.

"By Jupiter! I'd like to have it," grinned Hodge.

"Had it not been for her we would all pe in der Toombs dish minute. Veeping Rachel! but she went for dot Shrewd Simpson vot come here to find dot Broad street panker!"

By this time the big Jewess was standing before Harris Hodge who almost felt like shrinking from the savagery of her eyes.

"Vare is dot spy, hey, Meester Harris?" cried Mrs. Meek leaning suddenly forward like a toppling pillar. "He is vare he finds nodings."

"I don't doubt that if he came in contact with you," smiled Harris Hodge, who knew that in a contest of strength with the Amazon he would stand no show. "But show me where he is or tell me—"

"Gif me your lamp, Moses. I vill convince Meester Hodge dot Shrewd Simpson vill never find dot gold king of Broad street."

"He is dead, then?"

The sentence seemed to lend the Jew's cheek a deathly pallor.

"Dot is a secret vot Sarah keeps," he said. "She vill not tell me vot she did mit dot man, nor vill she let me see him."

The Amazon looked at Hodge from behind the lamp she carried and seemed to laugh with her eyes.

"Come," she said turning toward a door that led from the back part of the room, and giving her husband a look of authority she continued: "Stay vare you are, Moses, or go up to der children."

Hodge followed the woman from the room and into a back building which was a closed

structure almost destitute of anything like furniture.

"Moses might have let that man go, but he fell into my hands," she said as she gave the lamp to Hodge and bent over the bare floor.

The next moment the Jewess raised a door which was so neatly fixed in the floor that Harris Hodge did not notice it.

"A cellar?" exclaimed the man leaning forward.

"A well!" said the woman.

"Jupiter! is he down there?" and the city villain turned upon the grinning mountain of flesh and almost recoiled from her gaze.

There was no need of a reply, but the finger of the woman pointed downward, and she laughed till her eyes seemed to dance under their dark lashes.

"That's all," said Hodge. "I don't want to know anything more. One thing I do know, and that is that I never want to fall into your clutches."

The door fell back again, and the woman was about to conduct the plotter into the store when he touched her arm.

"How is he?" he asked.

"Safe. Ask me no more questions."

"I must—one more. Does he show any signs of weakening?"

"Yes."

"Good!"

The two turned back into the little room, which was quite dark until illumined by the lamp.

"Moses must be in the store; the door is open, I see," said Harris Hodge.

The door that led from the treasure-room into the store-room proper stood wide open, an unusual circumstance.

If Hodge had looked at the Jewess at that moment he would have seen that she was startled.

She sprung across the room, lamp in hand, and squeezed herself through the door.

A moment later, a wild ejaculation rung in Hodge's ears. He bounded into the store-room. The Amazon was bending over a man who lay on the bare floor. It was Moses, the Jew.

All at once she darted at her husband, caught him up, and shook him as if she would jumble his bones together. Life came back to the Jew under such a terrible shaking, and his eyes opened.

"He—ish—gone!" he gasped.

"Great God!" cried Hodge.

"Holy Peter," exclaimed Mrs. Meek, and dropping her husband upon the bare floor, she turned, ran into the little room, and rushed upstairs.

CHAPTER VI.

TWO BIRDS AT LARGE.

HARRIS HODGE, or Hotspur, by which name he was known to the people of his class, stood spellbound over the prostrate Jew.

The giantess had disappeared, but he could hear her mounting the steps with more than her usual agility.

Suddenly he stooped and seized the Jew.

"What has happened?" he demanded, shaking him vigorously. "Who has escaped?—the Nabob?"

There was no reply, for Mrs. Meek had let Moses fall so unceremoniously that he had relapsed into unconsciousness, and Hodge in his rage and disgust threw him upon a pile of clothing.

Then he turned into the little room with the intention of following the giantess, but when he reached the stair he encountered her coming down.

"It was not him," she said, meeting Hodge's questioning look. "It was somebody else if he saw anything at all."

Hodge looked and felt relieved.

"Mebbe the person is concealed in the store," he said, after a moment's reflection.

He walked into the store-room and lit the gas, after which, revolver in hand, he searched every nook between the treasure-room and the front door. The search revealed no traces of anybody, and he came back to the Amazon with a sneer on his lips.

"He must have fainted at his shadow," he said with a glance at Moses, who was still unconscious on the heap of clothing. "If one man is in the well and the other where he was, we have nothing to fear."

"But dot poy?" asked the Jewess, anxiously.

"Oh, we'll get him," laughed Hodge. "He may come to-morrow. When Moses comes to you will tell him to play the button without fail when the young fox comes."

"If he doesn't, I will," was the reply.

A minute afterward Harris Hodge was

threading the subterranean corridor which extended from "Jacob's" to the Jew's shop, and in a little while he was sampling the heavy beer usually sold at the saloon.

The hands of the clock now denoted a quarter after twelve, and Hodge was about to leave the saloon when a man came in whom he instantly recognized.

"Where have you been all night?" asked the new-comer as he joined Hodge, and the two passed to the sidewalk together.

"In several places. I've just come from the Bastille. Everything is right there now, but we've had a narrow escape."

"How?" asked Hodge's companion.

"Shrewd Simpson got on the trail somehow or other; he went to the Bastille and faced Moses."

"I wish I had known that ten minutes ago."

"Why?"

"I saw Shrewd Simpson, then."

"I guess not," said Harris Hodge, with a laugh. "I'd bet my head, Larry, that you saw somebody else."

"What's my eyes for?" cried Hodge's companion, with a show of resentment. "Don't I know Shrewd Simpson when I see him? He can't hood-wink me with any of his thousand-and-one disguises. I saw him awhile ago and I know it."

"If we were at the Bastille I would convince you to the contrary," was Hodge's answer. "I had the pleasure of looking into that man-hunter's grave."

"Who fixed him?"

"The Jew's wife."

"She told you so?"

"Yes, and I have every reason to believe it."

Larry looked puzzled for a moment.

"Where did you see this man whom you took for Shrewd Simpson?" asked Harris.

"On Mulberry; he has been living there of late, you know."

"I know the number, but you have been deceived, Larry. The Amazon fixed him beyond doubt."

Larry shook his head; he was not willing to admit that he had been mistaken.

"I'm going to convince myself before morning," he said.

"By examining the well?"

"No. I shall not invade the Bastille any more to-night. This man, Shrewd Simpson, is not as shrewd as he pretends to be. He stumbles on more clues than he ferrets out, and then he tries to carry every thing with a high hand. He is a dangerous man, though."

"And Felix Fox's friend," said Hodge.

At mention of the boy spotter's name Larry laughed and caught his pal's arm.

"Talk about narrow escapes, Harris," he said. "By the green fields of Eden, we had one to-night."

"We?"

"The boss and I," Larry went on.

"Marxe?" asked Hodge lowering his voice.

"I should remark. Think of catching the most dangerous boy in New York hanging to the door frame of the office and looking at the boss at work o' some kind."

"Did you do that, Larry?" cried Harris.

"Didn't I, though?" grinned the city tough. "Didn't I doff my boots and sneak upon him when he thought I was miles away? Didn't I pounce upon the night weasel and land him before the boss before he knew what was up?"

"Where is he now?" asked Hodge.

"D'ye think he's loose?" laughed Larry with a devilish chuckle while his eyes assumed an expression of ferocious triumph. "I'd sooner unchain a half-starved dog and walk off with a piece of meat in my pocket. You know that, Harris."

"Of course I do, Larry; but I'm anxious to know what you did with the young ferret. You and the boss had him in your power after you captured him, and of course you didn't let him go?"

"Bet your life we didn't, Harris. The discovery made the boss turn white, but when I told him that it wouldn't do to let the boy go he got a little of his color back and said that he had to die."

"And he died, of course," said Hodge, looking at Larry.

There was no reply, but Larry took a cigar from his pocket, and proceeded to light it.

"I want this game played out as soon as possible," he said throwing the match away. "Something is going to happen almighty soon if the girl holds out much longer. I believe I'll visit her."

"You?" cried Hodge, stepping back and looking in amazement at his pal.

"The individual who addresses you," was the

reply. "I'll call on her to-morrow at her house. I can get myself up in a style that'd deceive the Prince of Tophet, and I reckon I've played some shrewd side games in my time."

"But what will you do when you go to see the girl Estelle?"

"I'll convince her that the best thing she can do is to marry Rogers Marxe right away. I will pretend that I'm a fortune-teller or something of the sort, and before I leave she will believe that when she is the wife of Marxe, the Nabob will turn up safe and sound."

"You can't cram any such stuff into her head. That girl is educated and refined, and takes no stock in the black art."

"There is right where you're wrong!" exclaimed Larry. "She has consulted three astrologists since the Nabob's disappearance."

"And they told her—what?"

"I don't know all, but I know just what to tell her. I'm on the inside you see, Harris, and I will play a hand to-morrow that'll end this little game of ours within a week."

"You can try it, but I wouldn't," said Hodge, with a shake of the head. "At what hour will you play the hand?"

"About ten to-morrow forenoon. Just loaf about the Nabob's residence and see the renowned Persian astrologer Nezzur-Adden make his appearance."

"You don't know Persian?" cried Hodge, with a laugh.

"I don't have to, to her. You see I am an Englishman who has been astrologer to his Majesty, the Shah at Teheran. I've played this role before, Harris, and always with success."

"Does the boss know of this?"

"No. It's a play entirely my own. You know that if the girl becomes Mrs. Marxe, we get the whole amount; if she does not, we get a smaller sum."

"And quarters in, Sing Sing, eh, Larry?"

"Rooms in Hades, first!" grated Hodge's pard. "We have him in our clutches, and we can work a new game and an almighty big one, if he gets smart on our hands. This is the crisis of the play, Harris. When such fellows like Shrewd Simpson and Felix Fox get on the trail of the missing Nabob, it is time for us to make a ten strike."

"That is true. Where did you leave the boss?"

"At the office."

The two men walked from the spot where they had conversed in low tones and a square away they separated for the night.

"I'll be around when the Persian makes his appearance to-morrow," said Hodge. "You can play that trick, if you want to, but I wouldn't."

"No, you can't, old fellow!" was the answer, and the two villains parted.

Harris Hodge turned away with some incoherent sentences on his lips and hurried downtown.

"I'm going to draw on my banker," he said to himself, a little further on. "It is pretty late, I know, but I've got to have the chink."

It was past one o'clock when he reached the building that contained the office of Morey & Marxe.

"I am not too late," he exclaimed, seeing a light in two windows on the second floor. "Something important keeps the boss up."

Harris Hodge mounted the steps and knocked lightly on the office door; the next instant he heard a step approach it.

When the door opened he saw the face of the Nabob's partner, who started on seeing him.

Hodge glided into the elegantly-furnished room without an invitation; he saw at a glance that Marxe was about to quit the office when he appeared.

"Well, sir, what is it?" said the partner in no good humor.

"I want a thousand," said Hodge coolly.

Rogers Marxe started and his jaws met.

"I've got to have it," continued the city desperado.

"You know the agreement—" began Marxe.

"Can't help the agreement," was the interruption, and then the villain leaned forward and continued: "I want a thousand right away, and you know better than to refuse me!"

Rogers Marxe bit his lips, but got up and went to the safe.

CHAPTER VII.

HODGE GETS THE THOUSAND.

THE gleaming eyes of Harris Hodge followed the broker eagerly.

They saw him stoop and work the combina-

tion, and when the heavy door was pulled open, he noticed that the safe was almost large enough to hold a man.

Perhaps it was the reputed wealth of the house of Morey & Marxe that lent an additional light to the city desperado's eyes; he leaned forward in his eagerness.

"There isn't an available thousand here," said Rogers Marxe after he had pulled out several small iron draws.

"I want it all the same," said Hodge. "I'm not going away from here till I have it, or—"

He stopped suddenly, for Marxe was looking over his shoulder at him.

"How were you going to finish that sentence?" said the broker with a show of resistance which was only superficial.

"Do you really want to know, Mr. Marxe? I'm not going away from here without that money. There!"

"But there isn't a thousand in the safe."

"Let me look," said Hodge leaving the chair.

Rogers Marxe moved toward the money-chest and laid his hand on the door as if to swing it shut.

"Let that door be!" thundered Hodge, suddenly displaying a revolver. "If you shut it, by heavens! I'll spatter it with your brains! Now! I want a thousand. I must have it."

"After a few days you'll want more."

"If I do I know where to get it," grinned the thug. "Let me inform you, Rogers Marxe, that you are in my power now, and you will have to pony up whenever I get flat. It mayn't be a pleasant reflection for you, but it is terribly true nevertheless."

"Terribly true" it was, and the broker never realized before what it was to be wholly in the clutches of a man like Harris Hodge.

"Play fair, be square, and you will find me no hard fellow to get along with," Hodge went on. "I've got to have this money now. I will not say that I may not need more before long. I make no promises. You will have plenty at your command in a few days. When the girl becomes your wife you will have more money than you need. What's a thousand to you now?"

The speaker's eyes moved to the safe when he ceased. They told Marxe that he would talk no more, and that nothing would satisfy him but the amount already named.

"The game may fail," said the broker.

"The money first, talk afterward," was the answer.

Rogers Marxe turned to the safe and counted out one thousand dollars in bills which he handed to Hodge, who examined them rapidly and transferred the whole to his pocket.

"The game cannot fail," said the blackmailer. "I understand that the Nabob shows signs of weakening. Estelle must become your wife inside of a week. She will do so if she understands that the Nabob's safety, nay his life, depends on it. Are you discouraged, Marxe?"

"Nothing discourages me, but I don't like the situation. Already a boy has struck the trail. There is no telling to how many people he confided his discovery."

"He tells nobody," said Hodge confidently. "Felix Fox keeps his own secrets, but I understand that he will never look through another transom."

The Nabob's partner started.

"It was a good thing that Larry caught him in the act," the rough went on. "I'd give a ten to know how that boy struck the trail. Did he whine, Marxe?"

"Not once," said the broker. "He faced us with the mien of a lion. For a boy of his age he is remarkable."

"Larry didn't give him much rope, I suppose?"

"I don't know."

"What! didn't he fix him on the spur of the moment?" exclaimed Hodge.

"No. He took the boy off with him. I have not seen the pair since."

"But you feel assured that he will trouble us no more?"

"Larry told me that he would not."

"That settles it, but I would have thought that he would have fixed him here."

Rogers Marxe glanced down at the rich carpet that covered the floor of the office.

"I see; blood on the carpet tells a story," said Hodge, with a smile. "Larry did the best thing after all, I guess. He knows how to play many shrewd games. He is going to play one to-morrow."

"What is that?" asked Marxe, mechanically.

"Why, don't you know? He is going to play the Persian astrologer, and the girl is to be told by the stars that if she don't become Mrs. Marxe

that the Nabob will come home ready for the fine mausoleum he had erected in Greenwood."

Rogers Marxé paled suddenly and started forward with a wild exclamation.

"Is he going to face Estelle?" he cried. "Larry cannot impersonate a Persian astrologer. My God! does he want to spoil the whole game?"

"Not by a long dive," laughed Hodge. "Larry has too big an interest in the game itself to do anything like that."

"He must not try it," said Marxé, like a scared man. "You will see him before to-morrow?"

"I don't think I will."

"He must be seen! What put this foolish idea into his head? The girl—Estelle—will suspicion something the moment he tells her the pretended message of the stars. She will accuse me of being in collusion with the astrologer. He shall not play that hand."

"You'll have to see him and reason him out of the play, then."

"Where will I find him?"

"That's hard to tell."

"What places does he frequent?"

"Oh, he has a dozen favorite loafing places."

Rogers Marxé took out his watch and gave it a glance.

"Where does Larry board?" he asked Hodge.

"When he wants a bed he goes to Papa Picklock's."

"Where is that?"

"Mulberry, near Grand. Several of the boys have rooms there. A little red light hangs over the door."

Marxé got up with a countenance which showed that he had determined to seek the place mentioned by Harris Hodge.

"You may find Larry there and you may not," said Hodge looking at him.

"I will try. He must not try this game of his. It is dangerous. A shrewd man would see it."

"You and Larry for it," was the retort. "I wouldn't be afraid to trust him."

There was no answer for Marxé was anxious to quit the office.

Three minutes later two men emerged from the building and walked off together.

The street was almost entirely deserted, and the two men walked a square before they met any one, and then it was a night watchman who did not notice them.

Already Rogers Marxé had again donned the false beard and green goggles and no longer looked like himself. The addition of these articles had so altered his personal appearance that the most lynx-eyed man-hunter would have been puzzled.

Harris Hodge went with him a number of squares and then bade him adieu for the present. Marxé made the thug promise before parting that if he saw Larry he would send him to the Broad street office early after daylight; but when Hodge walked away he looked back and chuckled after the vanishing figure of the broker.

"In the net for as long as we wish to hold you, and by George! that will be while you've got a dollar, Rogers Marxé!" he exclaimed. "The sooner you marry the girl the sooner we'll have a new bank to draw from. I'm willing for Larry to play his game to-morrow, for I am convinced that he will not blunder. He's never blundered yet. As for the Nabob, we can work a new lay there. Whoopee! Larry and I will be able to go on Wall street if we keep on a while longer. I could go there with a thousand to-morrow. They talk about pinching times. I can't see how they can be that when a thousand is to be had for the asking. There's nothing backward about me when I want to replenish my pocket." And the city tough walked down the street laughing over the game he had played successfully.

As for Rogers Marxé, secure in his disguise as he thought, he struck Mulberry street as soon as possible, and hurried up the west side eager to reach and on the lookout for the place called Papa Picklock's.

The name with no additional explanation by Harris Hodge, was enough to tell the broker that it was no honest place, and he was well enough acquainted with that part of the city to know that its locality was decidedly against it.

The long journey in the loneliness of the ante-daylight hour came to an end at last, and Marxé found himself in front of a rather rough looking three-story frame building over the hall door of which hung a lamp with a red globe on which was visible the number of the place.

This was Papa Picklock's.

Marxé saw nobody near, and as the hall door stood ajar he stepped forward and pushed it open.

The steps were furnished with very worn matting and the man thought he made an unusual noise as he ascended.

On the floor above he found a small room which had an office-like appearance. It had a short counter at one end, three or four chairs and a broken settee. There was an odor of tobacco-smoke in the room.

"Two months ago I wouldn't have come here for the world, but now I have to," said Marxé to himself.

He moved forward to the counter over which burned a gas jet dimly, and saw behind it a fat man with a florid face, asleep in a chair. This personage must be Papa Picklock, thought the broker.

He had come there to find Larry, and he would have to awaken the sleeper.

As he leaned forward to do this he heard a step behind him. Of course he turned.

"Don't disturb that man," said the person whom he confronted. "I want to see you on private business, Rogers Marxé. That beard and those goggles become you well."

The Broad street broker recoiled with a cry; his senses seemed to swim.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE ENTRAPPED FOX.

IN the mean time, what had become of Felix Fox?

The reader will recollect that we left the boy spotter in the private office of Morey & Marxé, and in the hands of the Nabob's partner and the man who had caught him looking over the transom.

We have heard Rogers Marxé tell Harris Hodge that this man had taken the boy away, and that he (Marxé) knew nothing about his fate.

With Felix at large, the game being played by the conspirators could not succeed; the boy threatened to prove too shrewd for the whole gang.

He exhibited no signs of fear when he suddenly found himself confronted by Rogers Marxé and his confederate Larry, and he did not tremble when the broker's lips pronounced his doom.

"I guess you'd better make certain of me for personal safety," Felix said, looking at Marxé. "This is a cool, shrewd game you fellows are playing; it has baffled the cops and the ferrets for nearly a month. A mighty big game, I call it, Mr. Marxé. And the stakes are worth playing for, too."

The broker glared at the boy, who was fiercely eyed by Larry, whose fingers touched the butt of a revolver.

"Mebbe you'd like to know when I got onto your scheme?" continued Felix. "It wasn't very long ago, but I saw something when I was at Estelle's house. Rogers Marxé, you know where the missing Nabob is; his disappearance is your scheme, and the plot was carried out by your assistants. That man is one of them," and he looked at Larry. "I know him. There are precious few of the New York thugs whom I don't know, and Larry Lolan is an old acquaintance of mine."

The broker's accomplice frowned and let slip an oath. "What's the use o' prolonging this interview?" he said.

"None at all," replied Marxé.

Larry's hand closed on the boy's shoulder. "Come," he said almost lifting him from the chair in which he had seated him. "You need not think that you're goin' to get away. This is one o' the traps from which there is no escape."

"Make it certain," said Marxé's eyes as plainly as if his lips had spoken.

Larry understood the look and nodded.

Felix Fox went from the office, and down the stairs, with Larry Lolan at his side. One hand of the city desperado held his wrist as if it was in the grip of a vise, and his eyes watched the boy spotter with the intensity of the hawk.

There was no jerking from that grip, and nobody knew it better than Felix himself.

"I wonder where he is going to take me?" murmured Felix, as he was led along the deserted sidewalk. "A man like Larry may have a dozen secret places besides Papa Picklock's where he sometimes lodges. They caught me in a trap of my own making to-night. I wasn't expecting Larry to appear on the scene when he did. I saw only Rogers Marxé and the business he was transacting in the office. This is the tightest place I have ever been in, and it behooves me to play the best hand I ever played."

I promised Estelle that I would solve the mystery of the Nabob, but this doesn't look like flattering success."

Larry soon got out of Broad street with his prisoner, crossed Broadway into Greenwich, up which he walked to Cedar.

All this territory was known to Felix; he had explored it a hundred times.

"I am going toward the river," he said to himself. "Larry has his mind on a place where he expects to end the career of Felix Fox, but we will see how he succeeds."

The actions of the man who had Felix told that he was confident of the outcome of the game he was playing. Whenever he looked down at the boy his eyes grew full of triumph.

He kept on toward the river until only a little distance intervened between him and the dock. All at once he turned into an alley, walked down it some distance, stopped and inserted a key into a lock.

"We have stopped at last," muttered Felix, glancing up at the outlines of the building before him. "I don't know this place, but it is one of Larry's retreats."

By this time the desperado had opened a door, closed and locked it again.

All was dark about the boy spotter; he could not tell to what kind of a place he had been brought.

Larry, however, found a stairway despite the gloom and the two ascended. Felix mechanically counted the steps; there were sixteen.

The stair led them to another darkened room and to another flight of thirteen steps. The boy knew that he was on the third floor of a building when he was stopped.

Larry leaned away and struck a match on the wall. As the blaze flashed up Felix saw a small room with two chairs, a couch and one window, which was protected by a network of iron bars.

"You know what the orders are," said Larry, speaking for the first time since leaving Rogers Marxé. "I have been played ag'in' before, but never by you, I think."

"That is true," said Felix. "There was a time when I had you foul for a crime that would have landed you in Sing Sing, but I let you go."

The villain started and laughed somewhat derisively as he leaned forward.

"I see. You are playing your game now," he said, looking into Felix's face.

"I am not," said the boy, fearlessly. "I can tell you when, if you like."

"Well?"

"It was for the O'Hagan diamond robbery. I had you for that, there was no mistake. The night before I was going to effect your arrest you crossed the Cortlandt street ferry. A young girl accidentally fell between the boat and the wharf. You happened to be standing near by and you saved her life at the risk of losing your own. It was a brave act, Larry Lolan. I saw it all, but that didn't clear you of the crime for which I had run you down, but it did save you from Sing Sing."

"How?" asked the city rough mechanically.

"I hadn't the heart to deliver you over to the authorities after that," said Felix, "although, if I had done it, I wouldn't be here now."

"That's a pretty story an' there may be something in it," the crook laughed. "You were very clever not to send me up after that. You don't know what I did after I saved the girl."

"No."

"I picked her pocket."

A flash of indignation lit up the boy's eyes.

"How much had she?"

"Only a few dollars."

"That beats all the mean tricks I ever heard of!" exclaimed Felix.

"It was probably all the money the girl had in the world."

"I think it was," said Larry heartlessly.

"I wish I had seen that act at the time!" the boy went on. "It would have riveted on you certain chains I had already forged. When the girl thanked you for saving her life her pocket had been picked."

"I guess that's about the size of it," grinned Larry Lolan. "But that doesn't break the force of our game ag'in' you. You have tracked us in a new game, and we can't afford to let you go."

"You and Rogers Marxé, you mean?" said the boy.

"No difference to whom I refer," was the answer. "I have fetched you to one of the completest man-traps in New York. The floor beneath your feet is so shrewdly adjusted that at any moment you are liable to fall sixty feet—to certain death, of course! I have orders, you know, to put you out of the way. You are

ruinous to a certain scheme while you remain at large."

"You mean the mystery of Mark Morey!" cried Felix. "I have found a clew to the missing Nabob and you know it. The man is not dead. He is detained for a certain purpose in a certain place in this city. Larry Lolan, you are in the employ of the man who is to be benefited most by the infamous plot that has been formed against the Broad street Nabob."

"What is that man to you?" hissed the crook.

"Personally nothing," said Felix. "I have never spoken to Mark Morey in my life."

"But you have seen the girl?—Estelle sent for you?"

"Yes, she invited me to her home. I went, of course. She put the mysterious case into my hands, and I promised her to find the Nabob."

"Do you think you will?" grinned Larry, leaning forward suddenly.

"I will."

The man laughed outright.

"I am going to have a say in that!" he exclaimed. "I don't think you'll interfere in the hand I am playing. It is a bigger game than the O'Hagan diamond play was. Have you discovered that the Nabob is not Estelle's father?"

"I never thought of that, but she loves him, all the same."

"Loves him dearly, I should say," continued Larry. "She has a lover who is in Europe just now—"

"And a man of whom she thinks more than she does of Rogers Marx, the Nabob's partner," said the boy plotter. "And yet this man Marx expects to make her his wife."

"Which he will do!" the crook said, shutting his lips hard behind the declaration. "You haven't broken the shell of this big game, Felix. It is the shrewdest one ever gotten up in Gotham; there's millions in it. But, never mind. I am going to leave you here. I am not afraid to do this, for I know that Larry Lolan is to be tracked no more by the young Fox of the Bowery."

The man stepped back with his eyes fastened on Felix, and the boy detective saw, deep in their merciless depths, the gleam of a tiger's triumph.

"This isn't a big room, but it does the work always," Larry went on, glancing around the apartment. "The loudest cry gets no further than the walls. A gun might be fired here and nobody outside would hear it. Good-by, Felix."

The speaker had locked the door; his left hand was behind him.

All at once he touched an unseen spring, and the door opened. The next moment the young spotter was alone.

For several minutes Felix stood where Larry had left him, then he went to the iron-barred window and looked out. At first all was dark to him, but he presently saw the thousand and one street lamps below him; he was far above the pavement.

All at once the floor seemed to give way beneath his feet! Felix clutched the bars of the window and clung there tenaciously.

"Larry, the thug, was right!" he thought. "I am in a death-trap."

Then he put his feet down; they touched nothing. He looked downward, but all was dark.

The floor had disappeared!

CHAPTER IX.

FELIX IN LUCK.

FELIX thought rapidly in that awful moment. "If I let go I am doomed. I shall drop into a pit, and never see a trail again. I will hang here while life lasts."

Thus the boy spotter spoke while he clung to the iron bars of the window, his whole weight on the irons, which threatened to cut his fingers to the bone.

The room about him was now dark, the gas which Larry Lolan had lighted seemed to have been extinguished when the floor dropped; an atmosphere with an unpleasant odor came up from below.

Summoning all his strength, Felix drew his body up and climbed to the window-sill, where by grasping the top bars he rested tolerably well, and there he clung and caught his breath.

For ten minutes affairs remained in this condition, and then a peculiar noise told Felix that the floor was coming back to its place. At last it seemed to be permanently fixed.

Felix could not remain on the narrow sill. His position kept him in constant pain. He feared to trust the floor, which worked by some unseen machinery and was a trap, still he could not stay where he was.

"If Larry thinks me at the bottom of his pit,

I can go down," he said; "but if he discovers that I am not there, he may spring the trap again."

Felix left the window-sill and lowered himself cautiously to the floor. He pressed the boards firmly, yet with caution, but found them apparently solid.

When he left the window he drew off his shoes and groped his way to the couch. It was still a terrible moment for the boy spotter, for he could not tell when the floor might open again.

"I must get out of here," was his constant thought and frequent exclamation. "This uncertainty is as bad as death itself."

But the question always recurring was how was he to effect his escape?

Nerved to the utmost, Felix began to search for the door by which Larry had left the room. It did not take him long to find it, but, when found, it was locked.

After awhile the boy detective struck a match and began to search the room, with the light shaded by his hands. The stillness of death seemed to have taken possession of the house; his stockinged feet made no noise as he glided over the floor.

"This floor was put in motion by a spring somewhere in the house," said Felix. "It is Larry's work, and as I am still alive, I suppose he considers me dead at the bottom of the pit."

This was exactly the case.

If he could have followed Larry Lolan when he left the room, he would have seen him descend the stairs to a small apartment that was pretty well furnished.

"I've got the rat where I've long wanted him," ejaculated Rogers Marx's tool. "I always suspected that he was one of those who trailed me for the O'Hagan diamond work, I know it now. By his own confession he had me run down when I saved and plucked that girl at the ferry. He struck a trail to-night at the office that would soon end our game if we let him follow it up. But the rat dies for his smelly qualities. The sharpest boy in New York will now take a downward plunge."

Larry spoke the last words through clinched teeth, and walked across the room.

He ran his hand up the wall until it touched an object about as large as a door-knob. The next moment he disclosed a lid by touching a spring, and his fingers found the end of a cord in the wooden box.

"Now, good-by, Felix Fox!" continued Larry jerking the cord which had a knob at the end. "You have reached the end of the Nabob's trail."

For several moments afterward Larry stood motionless with one ear pressed against the wall. He seemed to be listening for certain sounds beyond the room he occupied.

All this time he held the cord he had jerked.

"I guess that did the business," he said at last, and then he pulled on the cord steadily for a moment and heard a noise that seemed to satisfy him.

Before Larry left the room, he opened a concealed sideboard in the wall and took a drink from a bottle which he found on its shelf.

"I'll go to Jacob's and find Harris," he said, and the minute he had locked the house behind him he was hurrying away.

We now know why Felix Fox was not molested after the replacement of the floor of his room. Larry Lolan, the city crook, did not dream that his trap had failed. If he thought of the boy spotter while he walked from the house, it was as a dead body in darkness, and where the sharpest detectives of Gotham would never find him.

As for Felix, he grew bolder as the moments waned and the floor remained immovable. He found the gas-burner that protruded from the wall, and ventured to light it. This showed him the whole interior of the man-trap, the door, the place where the floor divided, everything.

While the door resisted all his efforts to open it, Felix could discover no keyhole, which convinced him that it opened when a secret spring was touched. He had noticed that it had opened for Larry when his back was turned toward it; this indicated the presence of a spring.

The boy spotter had had a good deal of experience with secret springs and mysterious doors. It stood him well in need at the present time.

After an hour's work he seemed ready to give the whole thing up. The cunning of Larry the thug had baffled him.

It was getting on toward daylight by this time and the boy was anxious to escape, if escape was in the question, while it was yet dark.

Every now and then he looked up at the win-

dow, expecting to see the first gleams of day peeping through the iron bars.

"Larry may have touched the spring with the heel of his boot," said Felix, and the boy went to the couch and put on his shoes.

Going back to the door he recommenced the search.

Every inch of space he pressed firmly with his heel.

"They have baffled me!" exclaimed the boy. "I have escaped the horrors of your pit, Larry Lolan, to meet a worse fate. You may not visit this place for days. Shrewd Simpson may cage you and you would not tell him that I was your last victim. I hate myself for not taking you for the O'Hagan crime when I had you. I let your act at the ferry save you. And you robbed the girl afterward! I ought to die here for my leniency then."

Felix brought his heel down with mad emphasis on the floor and started toward the cot.

The next second there was a strange noise behind him; he turned with a singular cry.

The door was open!

If a bomb had fallen at the boy spotter's feet, he would not have been more completely surprised.

What search had failed to reveal, accident had accomplished. His heel striking the floor in wrath had found the concealed spring which had opened the prison door!

Felix was not the person to hesitate at a moment like this. He went down the steps to the room below, found the door that led from it, and descended to the first floor.

He was anxious to inspect the pit where Larry supposed him to be at that time, but he dared not stay in the house.

The front door was found to be locked; there was no spring to open it. Felix was not to be defeated by a bolt and a key; he went to a window near by, raised the sash, and dropped almost noiselessly upon the sidewalk unseen by any one.

"This feels like liberty," muttered the boy. "The cage is empty, Mr. Lolan, and the fox is going to prove the most dangerous tenant it ever had. You are one of those fellows who have great confidence in your inventions; you may not go back to your trap for days. I will not be surprised if you never go back to it."

The boy did not quit the place until he had fixed it in his mind beyond all possibility of missing it should he want to find it in the future.

When he moved off it was with a gleam of victory in his eyes. He pulled his hat over his forehead and hurried along the streets in the dark hour that ushers in the dawn. Nobody seemed to recognize him, and he was not long finding his little room on the Bowery in which, as the reader recollects, Harris Hodge told him the story intended to decoy him into the clutches of Moses, the Baxter street Jew.

Felix was tired when he entered the humble quarters which he occupied when not at work. Nothing had been disturbed; the little room had had no visitors during his absence.

Feeling the need of rest for the next exciting play which he knew was before him the boy spotter threw himself upon a couch and fell asleep.

While he slept the new morning dawned and the Bowery took a new lease of life.

Felix's sleep was too deep to be disturbed by the rumble of the elevated cars that ran past his window.

The sun was trying to brighten New York when he opened his eyes. Seeing the light streaming in at his window, he sprang out of bed but immediately started back for a man was asleep in a chair not ten feet away.

"By Jupiter! it is Shrewd Simpson!" exclaimed Felix, and the next moment his hand descended upon the sleeper's shoulder starting him at once into wakefulness.

"Here! what do you know?" cried Felix. "I have beaten you, for I have found a trail which leads to the Nabob. Where have you been?"

"Some place where you never was," was the reply. "I have been clawed by a tigress, choked into insensibility and thrown into a well for dead. And all because I had struck the trail of the missing gold-bug."

Felix uttered a loud exclamation.

"Then we'll work together, Shrewd Simpson," he said. "Let us first compare notes."

"Go ahead," said the independent detective. "Tell me all you know first."

CHAPTER X.

SHREWD SIMPSON'S STORY.

No boy ever had a better listener than had Felix Fox in the person of Shrewd Simpson, the hotspur detective.

Felix omitted nothing, and not once was he interrupted, though Simpson at times seemed about to do so.

"That is my story," said Felix, when he had reached the end of his narrative, the principal events of which are well known to the reader. "Now give me your story, Simpson, and we'll put our heads together and beat this shrewd gang."

"Beat it?" laughed Shrewd Simpson. "We're bound to be at it. They'll be on the lookout for us, but what does that matter? They may try a new hand, but it will avail them nothing. You want my story, eh?"

"I am waiting for it," said Felix.

"I will begin when I went to Baxter street to confront Moses, the Jew," continued Simpson. "I was confident that I had connected that sleek old fellow with the mysterious disappearance of the Nabob. When I reached the shop, and found him in the door in company with Harris Hotspur or Harris Hodge, as you know him best, Felix, I would have bet my head that I was not on the wrong trail. When I got into the store and marched Moses back to his treasure room, I knew beyond a doubt that I had made no mistake. I told the old rascal in plain language that I wanted to know where the Nabob was. He spluttered and went off at a great rate declaring his innocence, and finally called in his tigress wife who came like a storm."

"Jehu! may I never meet such a living being again!" exclaimed Shrewd Simpson, after a pause, as if the memory of his encounter with Mrs. Meek caused him to shudder. "She came at me like a maddened beast, and before I knew it her two hands, armed with claws as it seemed to me, were at my throat, and my senses swam before I could lift a hand. Moses came to her assistance, and I heard words that convinced me that that infernal pair knew something about the Broad street banker. To get to the end of the first installment of my story, I was choked into unconsciousness and knew nothing until I found myself half under water in a small place that had stone walls. In an instant it flashed through my mind that I had been thrown into a well, and a minute's inspection even in the dark confirmed it. I believed that I had been dumped into the place for dead, and my first thought was of escape. The water was not deep, but the narrow place was intensely dark, and the air was almost killing in its impurity."

"As soon as I could get to work I was climbing the stones, which served my purpose admirably, and I soon reached the top. Everything was quiet about the premises when I lifted the covering of the well and crept out. There was no noise in the shop, but above in the third story there was a dim light at one of the windows. I determined to get into the shop again at all hazards, for I had not done with Moses and his secret. I found my way into the treasure-room, and thence into the dark shop where I was when Moses received a visit from Harris Hodge, who, I am sure, came by some underground passage from somewhere. The tigress took Hodge out to show him the pit into which she had dumped me, and during their absence I happened to make a noise which brought Moses into the shop."

"As luck would have it, the old Jew came suddenly upon me, and so great was his fright that in a moment I had the old fellow at my feet in a swoon. To him I was a person back from the dead, for he had seen his wife drag me insensible from the house but a short time before. Not wishing to remain in the shop, which I knew would be searched when the woman and Hodge should discover Moses, I made my escape."

"It was one of the narrowest escapes of my career. By Jupiter! I can feel the claws of that tigress at my throat now. If you don't want to enjoy their clutch, Felix, keep away from the Jew's wife."

"I may have to deal with her before this game has been played out," said Felix. "After you left the shop what adventures did you have?"

"After midnight I accidentally ran across a certain man who wore heavy goggles and a beard."

"You did?" exclaimed the boy spotter. "Why that man was—"

"Rogers Marx, eh?" laughed Shrewd Simpson. "It was nobody else. I knew him by his gait, which can deceive no person who has ever watched him. When I saw him alone on the down-town streets at that hour I became his shadow, and I thought he would lead me back to the Jew's. But I was disappointed. Rogers Marx led me to Papa Picklock's."

Felix Fox gave vent to an exclamation.

"Larry Lolan has a room there," he said.

"I know that. Marx went up to the little office on the second floor. I wasn't far behind. Papa Picklock was on guard himself in his usual after-midnight condition—asleep in his chair behind the counter. I was certain now that Rogers had come to see Larry. When he started across the room to waken Papa I opened my mouth, and he turned like a person shot. There is where I missed it again, Felix. They say I am too fast for a man-hunter and I guess they are right. Maybe I should have let Marx rouse Larry, but I didn't. I told him that the goggles and beard became him well, but that I knew him all the same. He was thunderstruck. I told him that I wanted to see him on private and important business, and that we would adjourn. He made no reply. I had Rogers Marx at my mercy then, and fool-like, thought I could keep him there. But I didn't."

Shrewd Simpson smiled as he finished. The boy spotter was eager to get to the end of his narrative.

"I got that man down on the street," continued the detective. "Not a soul was in sight." I am Shrewd Simpson and you are Rogers Marx, I said looking him in the eye. "I can hold you for the abduction of Mark Morey, the Broad street Nabob."

"That was bold," said Felix.

"Of course it was, but they say I rush things sometimes. What do you suppose Rogers Marx did when I said this?"

"Denied the charge, of course," said Felix.

"He did nothing of the kind," was the reply. "All at once he flew at me like a panther and I was thrown against a building before I could resist. It was the unexpected that happened that time, I tell you. I think I must have left the impression of my body in the wall I struck; it was nearly as bad as falling into the hands of Mrs. Meek. Rogers Marx got away as he could easily do in the stunned condition I was in. When I got upon my feet again he was gone, and I had to walk off, beaten twice in one night. I came here to find you, Felix, and seeing you sound asleep, I dropped into this chair to wait for the end of your nap."

The boy detective said nothing for a moment after the conclusion of Shrewd Simpson's story.

"I'm afraid—" he began, but catching the detective's eye at that moment he stopped, and his glance fell.

"Yes, I made a mistake. I see it now," said Shrewd Simpson quickly. "Confound it! I fly at the game as soon as I see it. I was never cut out for a detective. I'll throw up the sponge."

"Not until we have found the Nabob and baffled these gold hawks of New York!" exclaimed Felix. "I am not going to blame you, Shrewd Simpson. They will change their tactics now; they will get a new hand, and try to play it successfully. Larry Lolan may have discovered before this that I am not in his trap, and Rogers Marx will see that he is more than suspicious; he has been accused. What will they do?"

Shrewd Simpson shook his head.

"They will do this for one thing," continued Felix. "The hunted will turn hunters; depend on that. The game takes on a new phase from this time. If the Nabob is alive he will be taken to new quarters, and we, Simpson, will receive the benefit of keen eyes and, perhaps the knife or the revolver."

"I am ready for the battle!" exclaimed Shrewd Simpson. "Hang me for a broker! if I don't walk into the private office of Morey & Marx this day, and play a hand that will be a daisy!"

"Going off again in a flash," laughed Felix. "No, Simpson, you will do nothing of the kind." The hot-headed detective cooled down.

"I'll put a bit in my mouth that'll hold me down," he said to Felix. "But, Jehu! don't I want to pay Rogers Marx for throwing me into that brick wall?"

"You shall do it," was the boy's reply—"you shall do it, soon. Wait and see."

CHAPTER XI.

LARRY'S FAMOUS PLAY.

If Shrewd Simpson was astonished when Rogers Marx turned upon him and threw him against the building, he was not more thunderstruck than was the broker himself when he heard his name mentioned in Papa Picklock's.

Followed and unmasked by a detective? It was something terrible to think of.

When he saw Shrewd Simpson stunned by his falling against the wall, he hurried away; it was no place for Rogers Marx.

He dared not go back to Papa Picklock's, for

the hot-headed detective might follow him there and actually arrest him. Of course, he wanted to see Larry Lolan, but he had to give it up.

It was nearly day when the broker reached lodgings.

"I must catch Larry early in the day," he said to himself. "He must not be permitted to play the Persian astrologer to Estelle. If he does, he will give the whole thing away. Enough has just happened to employ Larry and Harris. This man who calls himself Shrewd Simpson must be run down and put out of the way."

Rogers Marx did not sleep long, for he was up at an early hour and on his way to the Broad street office.

He had Harris Hodge's pledge that if Larry was found by his confederate, he should be sent to the office, but Hodge was not going to hunt Larry up for the purpose. At that hour Harris, with a part of the thousand dollars left, was taking a snooze at a place as disreputable as Papa Picklock's, and Marx was destined to wait in vain for the tool he was so anxious to see.

Meanwhile the hour for Larry's visit to Estelle was drawing near, and between nine and ten o'clock in the morning Hodge stationed himself near the Nabob's residence so as to get a peep at the Persian astrologer when he should appear.

At ten precisely a carriage rolled up to the house and the driver opened the door to let out a man who was attired in elegant broadcloth, glossy boots and hat and a waxed mustache, which gave him a foreign air.

"Jehu! can that be Larry?" exclaimed Hodge who was near by with eyes on the alert. "If he had not told me that he was to get here at ten entirely transfigured, I would not call that man my old pal. Ah, it is Larry! There goes the private signal for me if I am around."

The astrologer-crook ascended the steps in front of the mansion and rung the bell. When his summons was answered, he presented a card and bade the servant carry it to her mistress, Miss Estelle.

Upon this card gilt-edged and delicate was printed this inscription:

THE GREAT NEZZUR-ADDEN.

REVEALER OF HOROSCOPES

To His High Majesty

THE SHAH OF PERSIA.

All languages spoken.

This rather ostentatious card was carried to a beautiful young woman who glanced at it and with a smile told the servant to admit this important personage who had favored her with a call.

In a little while Larry was shown into the elephant drawing-room, and for the first time in his life, he found himself in the presence of Estelle.

The crook when "fixed up" was decidedly handsome. He seemed to have left part of himself at Papa Picklock's, and, to an innocent person like Estelle, there was nothing about him to indicate his true position in society.

"My lady," began Larry, after his obsequious bow, "the stars have sent me to you, and I am here by a high command which I dare not disobey."

"In other words you have come to reveal something," said Estelle, who seemed to place much confidence in Nezzur-Addin.

"That is it precisely. Ah! to reveal something! You are in distress, my lady. A dear friend and protector has disappeared suddenly and mysteriously. I am certain that the stars have found him."

The young girl was seen to start.

"Do you say this?" she exclaimed.

"Not I, my lady, but the planets and their mysterious influences speak through me," replied Larry rather pompously.

"If this is the case I must thank you for this visit," said Estelle. "What did the stars reveal?"

"The secret of the mystery of Mr. Mark Morey's disappearance, but, my dear young lady, the revelation can only take place under certain conditions. I am controlled by the influences of the planets. I have cast Mr. Morey's horoscope because I became interested in his case. I have with me the results of my labors; they are here."

As he finished, Larry drew three small cards from an inner pocket and spread them on his hand for Estelle's inspection. One card was green, the second red, and the third pale yellow. They were covered with dots and lines, the dots

supposed to be stars, the lines the pathways of planetary communication.

Estelle leaned forward and looked at the cards with much curiosity; after a moment's inspection she looked up at the false astrologer.

"You have spoken of conditions. What are they?" she said.

"This card names them," replied Larry, taking up the green pasteboard. "Before I can reveal the secret of Mr. Morey's disappearance, you must accept the august proposition I am authorized to announce. The stars have told me that a very fine gentleman seeks your hand. I am sure he already possesses your heart, Miss Estelle. Before the great secret can be revealed, you must promise the planets, through their humble servant Nezzur-Adden, to bestow your hand upon him within five days."

"And unless I do—what?"

"I must depart with the secret unspoken," said Larry, assuming a sad tone.

Estelle was silent for a moment, then she rose, and walking to one of the front windows parted the curtains and looked out.

The carriage was still before the house and across the street a heavily-built man was walking up and down, smoking a cigar.

Estelle saw this in her brief sojourn at the window.

When she came back Larry took hope; her countenance had undergone a change; he was sure he was master of the situation.

"Harris said I couldn't play this role; but I'll show him," he said to himself. "I'm better at a game of this kind than the regular Nezzur-Adden himself, if there really is such a person. I win this game for the boss to-day."

Estelle took the chair again.

"I am anxious to know what has become of my friend," she said.

"The stars will tell you."

"That is, they will reveal the secret if I promise to become a bride within five days?"

Larry bowed.

"Will they tell me where Mr. Morey is, or will they restore him?"

"They will restore him?"

"But who is this person whose wife I must become?"

"His name is Rogers Marx."

There was a slight start on the girl's part.

"Mr. Morey's partner?" she exclaimed.

"I do not know that," said Larry. "I only speak what the heavens have revealed. This person to whom they wish you to give your hand is handsome, wealthy and highly educated. Of his business relations I cannot speak. Within two days after the marriage the mystery of Mark Morey will be a mystery no longer."

"Why do you not report this to the police?"

"The planets send me to you," was the quick response. "I have never seen Mr. Rogers Marx; the stars have selected him for your life partner. In Persia everybody obeys them; the shah himself would wed a menial if the stars, through the royal astrologers, selected her."

"I cannot give this promise," said Estelle. "I must have time for reflection."

Larry got up and threw a rapid glance around the room. As far as he could see they were its only occupants.

He saw more than one object which his evil fingers longed to clutch; he knew they would find good storage at Moses the Jew's, or a profitable sale at Papa Picklock's.

"Then you reject the message?" he said to Estelle. "You do not believe in horoscopes."

"I have not said that I do not," was the reply.

"Do you think I would come here with a false one—I who have cast them for his High Mightiness the Shah?"

"I have not accused you of deception."

"You have visited astrologers since Mr. Morey disappeared?"

"I have."

"They have told you that Mr. Morey will come back before long, but they gave you no real satisfaction. Ah! you see I know what the charlatans told you! If you reject the message I have brought from the mysterious bodies that control our lives from their places in the heavens, all will be lost. If you become the wife of Rogers Marx within five days Mark Morey will appear; if you refuse, the mystery of the Nabob will never be solved."

"Is this final?" asked Estelle, gazing into the face of the false astrologer.

"It is final!" was the answer. "I never bear two messages from the stars to the same person when one has been rejected."

"I am obliged to reject the one you have delivered to me," Estelle said, smiling faintly.

A sudden light flashed up in Larry's eyes; he was near the door when he spoke again.

"You had better do this," he said.

There was a hidden threat in his tone, and for a moment he looked like Larry Lolan the city desperado.

"I am determined," said Estelle. "I can marry no man after this manner."

"Then the Fates will fall upon Mark Morey!" almost hissed Larry.

"Upon Mark Morey they shall fall!"

"Beware!"

"What! do you threaten me?"

"No; the stars are still speaking."

There was no reply, and Larry reached the door which Estelle opened for him.

"Ah! I forgot to recompense you," suddenly said the girl. "The Astrologer of the Shah cannot afford to carry star-messages for nothing."

She drew forth as she spoke a little purse, that made the crook's eyes flash. His fingers itched to grab it and make off.

Estelle opened the pocketbook and took out a ten-dollar bill, which she extended to Larry.

There was no hesitation on the crook's part, for he took the bill and bowed his thanks as he thrust it into his waistcoat pocket.

The next moment he was on the step.

"Good-morning, my lady," he said, doffing his hat.

"Good-morning, Mr. Lolan!" was the response.

Mr. Lolan!

The name, accompanied by Estelle's manner, seemed to stagger the crook from the large stone step.

She knew him! And all his play had been for nothing.

Larry seemed struck speechless by the mere mention of his own name. As the sound of it died away, the door was shut and he turned and walked toward the carriage.

"I'd give a thousand to know how she got onto me," he muttered. "I've been hit before in my time, but never a blow like that. Talk about thunderbolts from clear skies; this is a first-class one, and no discount on its force either. I must keep this from Harris, and, of course, from Marx. If the girl does not think that he sent me to her, we'll win yet. Nezzur-Adden, my old chap, I think this is one game you've lost."

And Larry tried to laugh, but the attempt was a failure.

As for Estelle, she went back into the drawing-room and confronted a well-built boy, whose eyes were full of victory.

"What do you say now?" the youth exclaimed.

"You were right, Felix Fox. That pretended astrologer was Larry Lolan. His own name staggered him."

"I knew him on sight. Him read the stars? He'll have the rules of Sing Sing read to him before he's much older!"

CHAPTER XII.

AN UNBENDING PRISONER.

It was a little past high noon of the same day when Harris Hodge walked into a certain clothing shop on Baxter street.

"Where's your father?" he said to a young man who was a youthful presentment of old Moses, so well known to the reader.

"He has gone away," was the reply.

"Out o' town?"

The young Jew hesitated.

"Mebbe you don't recognize me. I am Harris Hodge. Now, where is your father?"

The last words were accompanied by a look which accused the youth of lying, and Hodge stepped forward as he spoke them.

"My father is up-stairs, entirely prostrated. Dot man what he saw in der store last night—"

"What man?"

"Dot man, Meester Hodge; der von what creeped out o' der vell after he was dead."

"Shrewd Simpson?"

"Dot's der man."

Hodge laughed, but he did not bring any assuring color back to Isaac's face.

"See here! You don't mean to stand there and tell me that Shrewd Simpson is alive after passing through your mother's hands?"

"It ish even so."

"I recollect now that Larry claimed to have seen him alive after the occurrence here," continued Hodge. "I didn't put any faith in his story, and I don't like to in yours."

"It was dot man an' not a ghost dot frightened father. He saw Shrewd Simpson in this shop."

"The—Old Harry!" he exclaimed. "Larry was right then, after all. Your father is up-stairs, eh?"

"Endirely prostrated. He vants der prisoner taken away before der whole thing gits into the hands of der bolice."

"I'll see about that," said Hodge.

He went into the stolen property-room of the establishment, and ascended the stairs.

"Who ish dere?" asked a voice beyond the door, at the head of the steps.

Harris gave his name, and was admitted into a long room, which was darkened and foul of air. The person who admitted him was Mrs. Meek, the amazon.

"Harris! Harris! Veepin' Rachel! I haf waited for you," said a voice from near the front windows, and the next moment the crook was looking down upon the old Jew, who occupied a dirty cot that sent out an unpleasant smell.

The old man had undergone a wonderful change within the last twenty-four hours. If he had not found him on his own bed, Harris would not have recognized him.

"Harris, my God, I vas dyin'," continued Moses, as Hodge took a seat on the edge of the cot. "Dot man vat ve put into der vell ish at large, an' der house o' Meek vas crumblin' over my head."

"Not much, Moses. We are just winding up the business to big dividends," laughed Hodge.

"I von't be here when it ish wound up," said the Jew. "Der pird vat we caught must go."

"Not yet," said Hodge.

"He ish in my house, an' vile he ish dor it ish not safe. Harris, for my family's sake, let dot man out."

At this juncture Mrs. Meek stepped forward and touched the crook's arm. He looked up into her face.

"That man must go," she said firmly. "Moses and I don't want the police to find him here. We go to Sing Sing if they do; you know that, Harris."

The desperado sprung up.

"Let him remain a little while longer. We will win the game within forty-eight hours. We are going to play a hand that cannot fail. We can't take him away without preparation."

"He must go," said the Jewess firmly.

Harris was on the point of replying sharply and with insolence when his gaze happened to fall on the amazon's hands, and in a second he thought how they had clutched and mastered Shrewd Simpson.

"The children know that we haf a prisoner," said the Jewess. "I caught Rachel listening at his door to-day. She goes out on the street."

"She does!" cried Hodge. "Where is the child now?"

"I don't know; but Rachel is not likely to spread her discovery."

"She must not! The child should be kept in."

"I can't look after elefen children," said Mrs. Meek, a gleam of resentment in her eyes.

"Dot leedle Rachel come to me an' say, 'Daddy Moses, who ish dot man up-stairs?'" said the old Jew on the cot as his wife finished.

"Dare ish no man up-stairs, chile. I say, but Rachel shakes her head an' say, 'Daddy Moses, I heard dot man talk.' Harris, ven you can't deceive a leedle girl, how vill you fool der bolice? Dot mai must go!"

"If he goes you may lose a thousand dollars," said Hodge.

The old Jew shut his eyes for a moment, and his thin hands closed on the bed covering.

"It ish 'lose a 'tousand an' stay out o' Sing Sing, or get it and go dere mit Sarah. I vill lose it!"

For once in his life Moses Meek had decided against the accumulation of money.

"I must see this man, and then I will report," Harris Hodge said. "I understand that he has nearly come to terms."

He stepped back and looked at the woman, who exchanged looks with Moses, then she led him to a stair-loor in one corner of the long room, and held it open while Hodge drew a heavy false beard from an inner pocket and adjusted it on his face.

"I'm all right now," he whispered to the woman, and the two went up the steps.

At the head of the stair there was a strip of heavy velvet carpet which led to a door in a partition wall, and Hodge and the Jewess drew up before it.

"I go in alone," said Harris. "You stand here till I want to come out. I will know what is to bedone when I have seen him."

Mrs. Meek inserted a key into a lock and turned it slowly; the key made no noise.

"Now," she said in low tones to Harris.

The next moment the door opened and the New York crook crossed the threshold; a slight noise behind him told that the door had shut again.

Harris Hodge was in a room which was almost dark, but in one corner was a gas jet that burned dimly. The carpet was soft under his feet; if he had inspected the walls he would have found them apparently yield to his touch.

Before he had time to move, the light flashed up, and the crook found himself face to face with a fine-looking man, who came toward him.

This person looked, in the gaslight, like a man nearly, if not quite, fifty years of age.

His figure was a little above medium height, well rounded, and elastic. There was a certain springiness in his step which was observable as he came forward, and when he halted, Harris Hodge saw the dark eyes and finely-chiseled face of one of the best known men in New York.

"Is this never to end?" asked the prisoner. "You are one of the men who can answer that question. What do you say?"

"It depends on your action," was the response. "We will listen to no terms but those already proposed—an oath of eternal secrecy, and a letter to Estelle that will make her Rogers Marx's wife."

The prisoner drew back with his eyes fixed upon the cool crook. If Harris Hodge had glanced downward, he would have seen two hands suddenly clinched.

"The same infamous terms!" he said. "May I rot here before I will consent!"

"Very well, if that is your pleasure. There is a good likelihood of your rotting here, Mark Morey," said Hodge. "The police have ceased to look for you; the detectives are all thrown off the scent, and the girl doesn't take much interest in the missing Nabob."

"Estelle?" cried the broker.

Hodge nodded, but looked through his long black lashes to note the effect.

"It is an infamous lie!" exclaimed the Nabob, advancing so threateningly that Hodge involuntarily stepped back, and raised one hand. "Don't repeat the hell-coined falsehood in my presence! Estelle forgetful? No! she loves me as she always did, and yet I am not her father. Since I came here I have fathomed this daring game. I am to sell Estelle to Rogers Marx for my liberty, and am expected to swear eternal secrecy besides. My disappearance is to be accounted for by a lie which I suppose has been coined for the purpose, and I am to continue to do business with this man Marx! What does he pay you for this infamy?"

"I get my share," said Hodge, with the coolness of a born desperado. "You can bet your bottom dollar, Mr. Morey, that we don't work for nothing on a job of this kind."

"I would suppose not, with the shadow of Sing Sing about your feet. Go and tell Rogers Marx that the oath will never be taken by the Nabob of Broad street, and tell Estelle, if you dare, that she must never become that man's wife. I can remain here. I know that no sound can leave this room. It was prepared for me when I came. You see I am in good health. I can hold out with the best of my enemies."

"You can have that consoling thought if you want it," the crook said. "You won't write the letter? you won't take the oath?"

"No!"

Harris Hodge seemed to bite his lip.

"I thought you showed signs of weakening a few hours ago," he growled.

"I did that to see what effect it would have in certain quarters," said the Nabob, with a smile. "I am as firm as ever. No compromise with Rogers Marx and his tools!"

"That settles it," hissed Hodge, withdrawing toward the door and cocking a revolver. "We'll play the game out without the oath and the letter. New York has already forgotten you, Mark Morey, and you may suddenly and soon forget New York!"

The next moment Hodge's foot touched the bottom of the door, and when it opened he rejoined the Jewess on the outside.

"When can you take him away?" asked Mrs. Meek.

"He must stay here till we bring him to terms. I'd sooner undertake to transport a tiger than that man as he is now. He must stay."

"He cannot," said the Jewess as firmly. "Shrewd Simpson will search the building."

Hodge seemed to think that the amazon was about to fly at him; he stepped back and drew his revolver.

"Keep that man where he is till I order his release, or I'll send you and your husband to Sing Sing!" cried the desperate crook.

CHAPTER XIII.

CLOSE QUARTERS.

ROGERS MARXE occupied the private office of Morey & Marx on Broad street, and was the sole occupant of the place when the clock struck three that same afternoon.

The man was not at his ease; despite his determination to keep cool he had exhibited a good deal of nervousness in the business transactions of the day, but not enough to excite any suspicion.

He had failed to find Larry in time to tell him that he should not visit Estelle as the great Persian astrologer, Nezzur-Adden, and he was now wondering whether the crook had actually practiced this audacity.

He had been asked fifty times during the day about the missing Nabob, and to each questioner he had replied that no clew had yet been discovered. He was hopeful, however, that one would soon be found and that the people connected with Morey's disappearance, if it should turn out that he had been abducted, would be caught and punished.

"I hope I won't be troubled any more to-day," said Marx, as his last business visitor took his departure. "I have more important business than stocks and loans on my hands just now. I want time to attend to it."

He was cut short in his remarks by the entrance of a man at sight of whom the broker started and flushed more than half-angrily.

"Harris says you want me," said the visitor, dropping into a chair near the desk.

It was Larry Lolan, the crook and self-styled Astrologer to the Shah of Persia.

He was now attired in good but not elegant clothes, the broadcloth suit and shiny plug hat had disappeared, and his mustache showed signs of having been lately waxed.

"Yes, I wanted you very badly last night," said Marx. "I am afraid you come too late now."

"What has happened?"

"That is for you to answer. Have you played the Persian astrologer before Estelle?"

The crook started slightly and found the eyes of the broker fastened upon him.

"I want you to be 'square' with me," continued Marx. "This business is connected with the main game. You have been to see the girl—Estelle?"

"Confound it, I have," confessed Larry.

"What put that notion in your head?"

"Mutual benefit, colonel," was the answer accompanied by a slight twinkling of the villain's eyes. "You told me, you know, that the girl had already consulted several astrologers and what they'd do her, and I forthwith made up my mind to play a little hand I've played before with flattering success."

"I didn't want that play made. It wasn't policy. It didn't succeed, did it?"

"Not to any great extent," smiled Larry. "I did my best, colonel; the failure can't be properly laid at my door."

"Didn't the girl suspect you?" asked Marx eagerly.

"Suspect? she called me by name."

Rogers Marx seemed ready to bound from his chair.

"Her shrewdness has puzzled me ever since," continued Larry. "She listened to all my flub-dubbery and did not unmask her battery till I was leavin' the house; then she said 'good mornin', Mr. Lolan.' Jehu! if it hadn't been for my collar, I'd have jumped out o' my hide. I was Larry Lolan to her all the time I was tryin' to play the astrologer."

"As fortune-teller you told her what?"

"I informed her in proper language that the stars would restore the Nabob as soon as she became Mrs. Marx providin' the ceremony took place within five days."

"You told her that?" exclaimed the broker suddenly losing color.

"Nothin' else," said Larry. "If she was credulous enough to consult several fortune-tellers I thought she'd listen to one who used to dish up star news for his High Mightiness the Shah. I did it all for you, colonel; I had your interests at heart all the time."

Rogers Marx bit his lip. "I could have told you beforehand that the scheme would fail," he said. "I would have told you that last night if I hadn't encountered a certain disagreeable man on Mulberry street."

"Who was he?"

"A man called Shrewd Simpson."

"He recognized you where?"

"At Papa Picklock's."

"The man is alive then! I told Hodge that I had seen him since the Jewess of Baxter

street introduced him to the depths of her well. How did you escape from him?"

"I used force. I threw him against a building and got away."

"We'll fix him, colonel. The man is a little too hot-headed to play a cool hand. He will show up soon and fall into our hands."

"He must! I don't like the situation of affairs. I wish you had not played that astrologer game to-day. I have an engagement with Estelle to-night and if she should suspect that we were in collusion there might be an unpleasant scene."

"You've got to put on a bold front and lie it through, colonel," said Larry. "The Nabob is safe enough yet, but his keepers are weakenin' a little. The escape of Shrewd Simpson does it, you see."

"If the boy should escape also, Larry—"

"He can't do that!" interrupted the crook. "You saw my eyes when I led him out o' this office colonel?"

"Yes."

"They told you enough, I guess. We have only the hot-headed detective to deal with an' he is nobody. Go an' see Estelle; swear, if necessary, that you never heard of the Persian astrologer, and see if you can't bring matters to a crisis."

Larry glanced at the safe as he finished.

"Colonel I'd like to have a little cash to day," he said. "You can take it out o' my pay when the final settlement is made. I want five hundred."

Marx frowned but dared not resist the demand. He had lately had a similar experience with Harris Hodge, and he knew Larry Lolan too well not to hand over the amount desired.

When the five hundred had been paid the crook seemed to regret that he had not asked for a thousand.

As he stuffed the money into his waistcoat pocket he glanced out of the window near which he sat and gave a sudden start.

"There's the man now!" he exclaimed.

Marx sprang forward as Larry's finger pointed across the street.

"Does that look like him?" asked the crook.

"Like whom?"

"Shrewd Simpson. I refer to the man standing near the curbing with a cigar in his mouth."

Marx leaned forward and eyed the man closely for some time.

"He doesn't look like he did last night," he said, slowly.

"But it is Simpson all the same."

"He is on the watch?"

"That is just what he is doin'. Keep an eye on him for a while, an' watch me throw him off the scent. It isn't very hard to fool that man."

Larry glanced once more at the person whom he called Shrewd Simpson, the independent detective, and left the office.

Marx heard him on the stairs for a moment, and then lost the sound of his going.

For a few moments the man on the opposite side of the street retained his position, but all at once he gave it up and started off. It was evident to the broker that he had caught sight of Larry and was following him. Marx watched Shrewd Simpson from the window until his figure was lost to view, and then he picked up his hat.

"Now is my time to leave," he said. "The dog is decoyed away, and I can vacate the office without being watched. I am going to force the crisis to-night. If Estelle does not promise to become my wife I will play the darkest and the coolest hand ever played in this or any other city."

He went out, down upon the street, confident that Larry was able to take care of the man he called Shrewd Simpson.

The best part of the afternoon had vanished, and the shades of evening were descending upon the city.

Rogers Marx stepped into a cigar store and purchased several choice Havanas. This was his daily custom. Having transferred two from the counter to his pocket he stepped to the lighter near the door with the third one in his hand.

Just as the cigar touched the flame he glanced out of the open door.

A pair of eyes were upon him; he saw them instantly, and then he noticed their owner, a well-built boy with a bootblack's kit swung over his shoulder.

Marx lit his cigar and went out.

"Shine 'em up!" exclaimed the boy, springing toward him.

A thrill passed like an arrow to the broker's heart. "Come up into the office," he said.

"All right, captain, I'm your huckleberry when there's a job on hand," the boy answered, after a second's hesitation.

Marxe led the way up-stairs, and the boy at his heels did not see his eyes flash—but the boot-black's orbs flashed, too.

The broker unlocked the office door, and the two went in; the door closed behind them with a click.

"I've got him now," muttered Marxe, between his teeth, as he walked toward his desk. "Somehow or other, Larry failed; but, by the eternal heavens! I will not."

The next moment his hand touched and drew a revolver, and the weapon clicked as he wheeled upon the boy.

"You can't fool me, Felix Fox," he hissed, and his face flushed madly. "You have reached the end of the game as played by you. You have outwitted the man who caught you hanging to my door, playing the spy; but you can't beat the man who faces you now."

The bootblack went back a pace and then planted himself firmly before the Broad street broker.

He did not change color.

"What are you going to do?" he asked, looking into Marxe's face for a moment, and then glancing at the revolver in his hand.

"You admit that you are Felix Fox?"

"I am Felix Fox," was the answer, "and I am anxious to see you. Sit down and listen to me, Rogers Marxe. No? Stand, then. I am going to have my say. The man who last left this office was Larry Lolan. He will never come back here to report. We have found the trail of the missing Nabob. We've got all the threads in our hands. If I am not at a certain place by four o'clock you will be in the hands of the law!"

Marxe appeared to gasp.

"How much do you want?" he asked.

"A million dollars more than you've got," laughed Felix, and then he quickly continued: "I wouldn't touch a cent of your money for all Gotham, and I'm free to say that the leeches you have attached to yourself have bled you freely. This game of yours is more for gold than love, isn't it, Mr. Marxe? You have an engagement with Estelle to-night. It must be kept. You must not be a minute behind time. Remember! if you fail to show up, the whole bottom of this big game of yours will fall out with a noise. I have got fairly to work. You need not go to Papa Picklock's after Larry—he isn't there. You need not drop into 'Jacob's' on the look for Harris Hodge; you wouldn't find him if you did. You will go to Estelle's as if nothing had happened. You fail at your peril. Remember, Roger Marxe!"

The astounded broker did not recover till the door had opened and closed. Felix Fox was gone!

CHAPTER XIV.

ALMOST FOUND.

THE boy spotter smiled to himself when he swung the bootblack's kit over his shoulder and went down-stairs.

"Undoubtedly Rogers Marxe wishes me in China or elsewhere!" he ejaculated. "The moment he saw me before the cigar-store he knew me despite my get up, and when he invited me into the office he thought he was getting me into a trap. Ha, ha! Rogers; if there were no worse traps than yours in New York we'd be well off. You will go to the Nabob's residence according to your engagement with Estelle, or you will land somewhere else about that hour."

Larry and Shrewd Simpson had already disappeared and Felix did not attempt to find either.

"I've got to work fast if I succeed," he continued. "I will now invade the classic precincts of Baxter street for the trail leads in that direction."

Night had succeeded the evening shades when a boy who looked as though he had lately arrived from the country appeared suddenly to Isaac the old Jew's son as the young Hebrew was watching spider-like for a customer in front of the shop.

The boy was Felix, and his general make-up, including the old-fashioned though not very fat carpet-sack that he carried, proclaimed him an easy victim to the clerk.

"What's them breeches worth, hey?" said Felix, turning to Isaac who came forward with the alertness of a leopard.

"Dose? Elefen tollar. Dey vas made for you my young fr'ent."

"Who made 'em?"

"A man vat makes der pest bants in N'y York. Vat ish your name?"

"Hezekiah Hamilton. I've just got in from Peapod Ridge, Jersey, and mother told me to buy a pair of breeches as soon as I got to York."

"Dot vas a goot mother. I vish ve all had 'em, my fr'ent. Now Meester Hamilton of Beabod Ridge, dose bants was actually made for you. Der dailor says ven he prings 'em down here 'Ef any o' does Hamiltons come along let 'em haf dose bants at gost."

"That's almighty clever," said Felix. "Did he mean only this pair? I doan't like the color exactly."

"Dat offer includes all der goods we carry. Der same dailor makes 'em all to our order, an' as you vas one o' dem Hamiltons you shall hef your choice at gost."

With the last sentence Felix was pounced upon by the young Jew and hustled into the shop, baggage and all. Isaac had become an apt pupil of his father, and long before the commencement of our story, had graduated in the art of selling ready-made clothing.

The young Jew found the supposed Jerseyan rather hard to please, although evidently determined to purchase. More than twenty pairs of pants were shown and rejected. Isaac came down dollar after dollar until the garments seemed about to be given away.

Felix more than once glanced down the long room toward the little apartment where several exciting scenes of our story have taken place. Did he know what was beyond and above the door that led to it? Was he aware that the long-missing Nabob was on the third floor of that building in a room where the loudest cry was no more than a whisper?

Certain it was that the boy detective had not visited the Jew shop for nothing.

At last Felix found a pair of pantaloons that seemed to suit him, but he offered Isaac a price that seemed to take his breath.

"Veepin' Rachel! we must lif!" exclaimed the young Jew. "Dose bants cost us sefen tollar an' you offer but three. Mine fr'ent, do you vant to send der whole family to der boorhouse an' der pauper's grave? Gif me six tollar an' dose bants shall grace yer form."

Felix was immovable.

"Three or nothing."

"I vill haf to see my sick father," said Isaac. "Stay here, mine fr'ent, till I come pack," and the clerk marched off with the clothes.

"Hold on! I don't like to stay here," cried the boy spotter. "If some thief 'd drop in and steal while you were gone, I might be blamed with the job."

Isaac stopped and looked at Felix who had come forward.

It would not do to leave the shop entirely unwatched, not even for a few moments. There were hundreds of adroit sneak-thieves who work Baxter street, and the Meeks had suffered by their depredations.

The young clerk cut the problem by opening the door of the treasure-room and sounding a singular call.

In a moment it was answered by a young, sharp-featured girl of seventeen, and the shop was left in her care.

Felix went up-stairs close behind Isaac, and the young Jew led him to the cot occupied by his father, whose grip on life seemed very frail indeed.

From the shock produced by suddenly seeing Shrewd Simpson when he was supposed to be dead, the old Jew had not recovered; but when he saw the boy and the pantaloons, and caught the connection between them, the gleam of avarice came back to his almost lusterless eyes.

"Three toller for dose bants?" said old Moses slowly. "Isaac, my son, git my shroud out, an' let me depart in beace. Dose bants vas made to sell. Who bese you, poy?"

Felix leaned over and caught the old man's eyes. In an instant he thought he saw him start.

"I want to see your father," he said to Isaac. "Moses Meek, I am here on important business."

The sudden change in the boy's looks and tones made the young clerk recoil.

"Go down, Isaac," said the old Jew and the next moment Felix and Moses were the only occupants of the big room whose only light was a gas flame which did not begin to dissipate the shadows.

"I am here for the Nabob," said Felix. "Don't cry out nor let slip a falsehood. I am Felix Fox and—"

"Veepin' Rachel! ter poy I vas ter watch for!" interrupted Moses.

"I don't doubt that. I was to be drawn into your trap by a trumped-up story by Harris Hodge, but the scheme didn't work, though I

am now under your roof. Moses, I am here to give you your choice of two things—continued existence here or life in Sing Sing!"

The Jew seemed about to leap from his couch at the announcement. Felix darted down and clutched his wrist.

"Remember; liberty or Sing Sing!" he cried. Old Moses fell back with a groan.

"Quick! take your choice," continued Felix. "The game is near its end, and there is no time to lose. Shall it be Baxter street or Sing Sing?"

There was no reply. The Jew lay motionless on the rags of the cot beneath the boy spotter.

"Heavens! the man is dead!" cried the boy.

He put a finger to the old shopkeeper's wrist and found only the faintest semblance to a pulse.

"Dead or not, I can't stop here," Felix said, moving back. "I must solve the mystery of the Nabob now or never. In a moment I may be discovered—"

He stopped suddenly for the door at the furthest end of the room opened and a child came in.

Felix sprung toward her.

"Show me to the man you have up-stairs or somewhere. Quick!"

The child, a girl of eight, glanced from Felix toward the cot where her father lay.

"Are you Daddy Moses's friend?" she asked.

"Yes."

"Then I will show you. Come this way, please."

The boy detective followed the child from the room to the stairway that led to the third floor, and without accident reached the door that stood between him and Mark Morey.

"He is in there," said the child.

"Where is the key?"

"Oh, Mamma Moses keeps that, was the answer."

"Where is she?"

"She went over to Mrs. Levi's after supper. I will go and tell her."

Felix tried to restrain the girl, but she was gone in a flash, as it were, and he was alone.

"Here is a pickle," muttered the boy. "I don't want to encounter the tigress of this establishment before she knows anything about the choice I gave her husband. Can it really be that only a door separates me from the Nabob of Broad street? Have I actually found him at last?"

The boy detective turned upon the door and struck it with his clinched hand.

"I'd give my right hand for a key now!" he said. "My blow did not seem to sound in the room beyond the door. Heavens! There is some one moving below. Some one is coming up-stairs!"

Felix drew a revolver and sprung toward the head of the steps. He was not certain who was coming up, but he knew that it was some dangerous person.

All at once there burst into the room the figure of a ponderous woman who was a Colossus to the boy.

"The tigress!" cried Felix, recoiling a step, and then he threw up the hand that held the six-shooter.

"I have found the lost Nabob, and I want the door opened that leads to him," he said to the woman whose aspect was simply ferocious. "I make you the proposition I made your husband awhile ago. If you liberate Mark Morey, you shall not be molested, for you have been the tools of the worst gang in the city; if you refuse I will see that you go straight to Sing Sing! The door yonder leads to two places: the Nabob's prison and the State dungeon! We've got all the threads of the crime in our hands, Mrs. Meek. The men you betray shall never lift a finger against you."

"Can you promise that?" cried the Jewess, slipping forward.

"I can and I do. Now open the door."

The wife of the old clothier thrust one hand into her bosom and drew forth a peculiar key. The following moment she was at the door.

"Some man is down there!" she suddenly exclaimed, wheeling upon Felix and glancing toward the stair, and then she seemed ready to sink to the floor.

"What did you say about protecting me from the people we have served?" she went on. "My God! the man below is Harris Hodge!"

Already there was a man on the steps. "I will protect you!" said Felix firmly. "The man down there never gets into this room alive." And he went toward the stair with a flash of fierceness in his eyes.

CHAPTER XV.

HOW LARRY "FOOLED" SHREWD SIMPSON. MEANTIME, LARRY LOLAN WAS PLAYING WHAT

he called "a capital hand" against Shrewd Simpson, the independent detective.

The reader will recollect that he left Rogers Marx's office for the purpose of taking Simpson from his post on the opposite side of the street, but he did not see Felix who, in the guise of a bootblack, saw his movements, but did not follow him.

Shrewd Simpson appeared very willing to be led from duty by the city rough, and Larry could hardly conceal his joy when he glanced over his shoulder and saw the detective at his heels.

"He sha'n't escape me as he escaped the Jewess," he muttered. "Just keep at my heels awhile, Shrewd Simpson, and I'll show you a little game that catches the oldest birds."

If Larry could have known the detective's feelings at that moment, he would not have been so profuse in his congratulations.

If Shrewd Simpson sometimes did some things which cooler-headed men of his class would not sanction, he was Larry's match in acumen. He was, moreover, as brave as a lion and had been known to make arrests from which the bravest officers shrunk.

He never lost sight of Larry Lolan, and the rough had not gone far before he found Simpson on his side of the street, and only a few steps behind him.

"I told Marx that I'd get this watch-hound away and I have done that. I'm not going to stop there, though. I failed to play Nezzur-Adden to my satisfaction to-day, and I believe I owe a part of that failure to you, Mr. Simpson. You told Estelle that I was Larry Lolan, and nobody else. Who else could have told her?"

Larry threatened to lead Shrewd Simpson a long chase, but the detective did not seem to care. He seemed to have plenty of time on his hands.

All at once Larry was stopped in an unexpected manner.

As he turned a corner he was brought face to face with a crowd of people who blocked the sidewalk. It was impossible to penetrate the mass, and the New York rough with an oath inquired what was the matter. He was told that a well-dressed man and a stranger had fallen in an apoplectic fit, and was then dying on the sidewalk.

There was nothing in this announcement to attract the crook. It was only one of the everyday incidents of city existence.

"There's no apoplexy there," said a man, who appeared from the inside of the crowd as Larry was about to turn away. "He was trying to cross the street before a horse-car and failed; got hit and tumbled onto the stones. Half a dozen saw it. They're coming with him now. Stand back there, please."

The next moment several men appeared carrying the unconscious body of the victim of the accident. A big policeman broke away through the crowd.

Larry instinctively leaned forward, and in a second he was looking into the man's face.

"Hades and horns!" cried the tough, as his gaze became riveted upon the bloodless but handsome face on the stretcher. "That is Clyde Caldwell, the girl's lover who was in Europe. When did he get back?"

The men and their burden had passed on, and the crowd was closing in behind again.

Larry forgot Shrewd Simpson.

"We don't want that man in the game now," he said to himself. "From what I've heard of him he is capable of giving us a good deal of trouble. Estelle cannot know of his return. She was not looking for him. Did somebody cable him to come back?"

The unconscious man had been taken away, and the crowd was rapidly dissolving.

"Is he badly hurt?" Larry asked a man who had witnessed the accident.

"Oh, no, knocked unconscious and bruised a little, nothing more," was the reply.

"Who is he?"

"They found papers in his pocket that show him to be a Mr. Caldwell, of Thirty-first street."

Larry knew he had made no mistake; the man certainly was Estelle's absent suitor, and Marx's rival.

"Are they going to take him home?" asked the crook.

"When he comes to," was the reply.

Larry moved on.

"Something's got to be done," he said between his teeth. "This man must not be allowed to come into the game now. Estelle must not know that he has come back. By heavens! he shall not see her! I know where he lives. A man knocked down by a street car and badly

bruised isn't going to call on his woman before he is himself again."

The man stopped suddenly at the end of his sentence and looked after the stretcher and its occupant, but both had disappeared.

All at once he thought of Shrewd Simpson.

"By Jericho! this unexpected accident took Simpson clear out of my head!" he exclaimed. "Where is the watch-dog now?"

Larry tried to answer his own question by throwing shrewd glances around, and for several minutes his eyes searched fox-like for the man who had lately been on his track.

But not a glimpse of the detective could he catch.

"Well, he won't go back to Broad street, anyhow, or, if he does, he won't find Marx in the office. I've thrown him off the scent, but I was going to do more than that. I intended to fix Shrewd Simpson forever! There was to be no well business this time."

The crook did not quit the scene of the accident until he was satisfied that the hotspur detective was not there, then he turned abruptly and darted down a narrow street at a sudden turning of which he plunged into a hallway.

The house entered by Larry was a notorious resort of criminals of all descriptions, and was not far from the spot where the crook had lost sight of Shrewd Simpson.

Larry shut the easy swinging door behind him and opened another at the side of the hallway. The next moment he stood in a small room furnished with a counter and shelves on which were a number of liquor bottles and colored goblets.

This place, known to the fraternity as "Paradise Lost," was not strange to Larry. He had entered it a thousand times before, and his credit was good enough to let him run up an occasional account with the proprietor.

As a usual thing from three to ten crooks were always to be found in the drinking room of the "Paradise Lost," but this time Larry was not confronted by any, consequently he need treat nobody but himself.

He walked straight to the bar, which was presided over by a little man who was almost hideously pock-marked and had but one eye. He grinned when he saw Larry, whom he seemed to recognize, and took down a certain bottle, as if he knew his customer's exact wants.

Larry poured the thick glass full and threw back his head, to down the red-hot contents at a single swallow; but the next instant he lowered his hand, sprung back, and turned half-way round.

Over the shelves hung a mirror, and the crook had seen in it the reflection of a face he was not looking for in "Paradise Lost."

"Hold on! I have you, Larry!" said a voice as the crook wheeled, and a revolver leaped at his face as a man stepped forward. "I knew you would come here, and so I came and waited."

There was triumph in every word, and Larry Lolan bit his lips, for he was looking into the eyes of Shrewd Simpson!

"I guess the game is pretty well played out," continued the detective.

"What game?"

"The missing Nabob one," was the answer.

"What are you going to do with me?" snapped Larry.

"Take you to number three hundred Mulberry."

The crook recoiled. That was the general office of the city detective force, and was not far away.

"You will go, eh, Larry?" continued Simpson.

"Confound it, I have to, I guess! But when you charge me with being mixed up in the Nabob business, you're off your base."

Shrewd Simpson made no reply, but stepped forward before Larry could prepare for a surprise, and the click of a steel bracelet told the crook that he was surely caught.

A minute later the two men were on the street.

Larry glanced up at his captor, and then went to work at the handcuffs. It was not the first time he had felt them at his wrists, but they had never held him long.

"Now, Simpson, I'll show you a trick," muttered Larry, a little further on.

The next second he threw up his hands and struck the detective a terrible blow in the face with the irons. Shrewd Simpson reeled; the handcuffs rung on the pavement; Larry was running away!

The detective was after him in a moment. Revolver in hand, he ran in and out among the people like a fox; it was an exciting chase, and Larry found that he had a runner at his heels.

Suddenly he sprang down an alley way. The following second Shrewd Simpson was at its mouth.

The glare of a light for a moment showed him the flying man; he halted, threw up his hand, and fired.

With the flash and the ringing shot a human figure halted in flight, and a wild cry rung from a man's lips. The next moment a man fell forward on his face.

"They don't often get away," said Shrewd Simpson as he moved toward his victim.

Midway in the alley he bent over the crook and heard a groan from his lips.

"You're right, Simpson; the game's about played out," said Larry.

Then the crook's head fell back; he was dead.

CHAPTER XVI.

FELIX WINS A VICTORY.

WE go back to Felix in the third story of the old Jew's establishment, and waiting at the head of the stairs for the man supposed to be Harris Hodge, the cool city desperado and Rogers Marx's most dangerous tool.

The boy detective did not shrink from the combat which he knew was inevitable, but stood on the landing revolver in hand and waited for the man who had not seen him.

Mrs. Meek stood pale and shuddering near the door that kept the missing Nabob from liberty. With the walls of Sing Sing before her eyes, she secretly wished that Felix would get the best of the fight although under other circumstances she would have dashed at his throat.

"Halt! where you are!" suddenly cried Felix as the figure of Harris Hodge rose above the level of the top step.

The crook halted and his hand moved quickly toward a hip pocket.

"Draw and drop," said Felix. "I have the best hand, Mr. Hodge, and you don't want to show any agility here. Come up. Don't be backward; this is a place you've visited before."

The boy stepped back, but kept the villain covered with his revolver, and Hodge came on doggedly.

His countenance was an admixture of fury and chagrin.

"You did it," he flashed when he caught sight of the Jewish Amazon. "You have given the whole game away, and you shall pay for it, too."

"Silence!" said Felix over the pistol. "Open the door, Mrs. Meek."

"If you dare!" grated Hodge, and he would have thrown himself forward if the menace of eye and revolver had not deterred him.

Frightened by his look and voice the Jewess hesitated.

"Unlock the door!" commanded the boy spotter. "If that man attempts to interfere he will be turned over to the coroner and not to the police."

Mrs. Meek took a key from her pocket and inserted it into the lock, turned it quickly to the right, and then threw the door open.

A man in his shirt-sleeves was reading at a little table under a gas-jet. As the door opened he threw down the book, sprung up and then came forward.

Astonishment lit up his eyes when he crossed the threshold of what had been his prison; he did not know what to make of a big man held at bay by the revolver of a boy.

"You are Mark Morey?" asked Felix.

"That is my name," was the reply.

"The missing Nabob some people call you. I am Felix Fox, but you don't know me, which makes no difference. That man yonder is Harris Hotspur, sometimes called Hodge. He is one of the two men who have helped a certain Broad street smart Aleck in a shrewd little game. Do you recognize him?"

Mark Morey leaned forward and looked Hodge over from head to foot.

"He is the exact size of one of the men by whom I was brought here several weeks ago," he said.

"He is one of the men. There were two were there not?"

"Two."

"The other is called Larry Lolan. Shrewd Simpson is taking care of him just now. You will exchange places with Mr. Hodge now."

Felix stepped aside as he finished and pointed toward the open door with his left hand.

"Walk in, Mr. Hodge," he said to the crook. "The Nabob gives up his quarters to you without a murmur."

A dark scowl passed over the villain's face, but he did not move.

"Not going, eh?" cried Felix. "You do not want to disobey at this stage of the game, Harris Hodge. Forward, sir!"

"I won't! by heavens!"

"Very well, then," interrupted Felix, his eye glancing anew, as the entrapped rascal saw, over the barrel of the six shooter. "I shall be compelled to leave you where you are."

"I'll go, curse you, city rat!" growled Hodge. "This game isn't as near out as you think!"

Felix's reply was a smile which discredited the crook's mad assertion.

Harris Hodge moved forward and Mrs. Meek recoiled as he came near.

He crossed the threshold of the little room and Felix made a sign for the Jewess to shut the door, an act which was accomplished in the space of a flash, and the spider was caught in his own trap!

"Can that door be unlocked from the inside?" asked the young spotter.

Mrs. Meek shook her head.

"What is the condition of the front windows?" he continued turning to the Nabob.

"They are secure. I canvassed every chance for liberty," was the reply. "I am convinced that that room was prepared for me before I came. Isn't this true, woman?"

"Meester Hodge and Lolan worked at it a whole week," was the reply.

"I knew it! But how is Estelle?"

"Oh, the girl's all serene," smiled Felix.

"Thank Heaven for that," ejaculated the banker. "The plot is against her."

"And a cool plot it is for beauty and big money. But we've got the twist on the gang now, and there'll be a sensation for the morning papers."

"Roger Marx! He has been arrested, of course?"

"He is free and has an engagement with Estelle to-night."

Mark Morey started toward the stairs with an eager cry.

"Show me to this villain of villains!" he exclaimed, as he turned upon Felix with flashing eyes. "Stand me face to face with this traitor partner of mine and I will give you half I'm worth."

"Don't be rushed," said the boy spotter. "There's plenty of time. I have given this woman a pledge that she shall not be molested. She and her husband have been the gang's tools. Harris Hodge and his pal have held a sword over their heads. Will you respect the pledge?"

Mark Morey looked at Mrs. Meek and then at the door that shut Hodge in.

"I'm going to let the law take its course," he said. "There are some things I cannot forget. This woman could have informed the police at any time. Why didn't she do it?"

"You wanted money more than you hated crime," continued the Nabob, addressing the Jewess.

"More than once you threatened to fly at my throat. If you promise to leave the city within twenty-four hours I will do nothing. If at the end of that time I find you here I will open the doors of the Tombs for you. What do you say?"

Mrs. Meek was speechless.

"I will answer for her," said Felix. "She will go."

Then the boy stretched out his hand for the key to Hodge's prison, and thrust it into a pocket when it had been obtained.

A minute later the three went down stairs and Felix glanced toward the cot where he had left Moses unconscious, if not dead, as the reader remembers.

He saw the outlines of the old Jew's figure; they were fixed like the outlines of a corpse.

Mrs. Meek went toward the cot.

"Wait," whispered Felix to the Nabob. "I want to hear how Moses is."

The two men saw the Amazon bend over the cot, but for a moment only. She sprung up as if a serpent had crept from beneath the scanty cover.

"Daddy Moses is dead," she said, coming toward the spectators.

"And he never got his deserts, I'll bet my life!" said Mark Morey.

Felix and the Nabob turned away and retired to the store-room below.

At the boy's request Morey pulled his hat over his eyes, and the two hurried downstairs.

Nobody recognized the missing millionaire in the man who walked beside Felix until the pair were about to enter a cab which the boy had stopped.

At that moment Felix felt a hand on his arm, and he turned to look into a pair of eyes that fairly glistened.

"You got him, I see!" said the owner of the eyes in a whisper. "I got the pal, but I had a tussle for him."

"Where is Larry?" asked Felix.

"On his way to the morgue. Confound it! I had to do it. He gave me the bracelets full in the face, and struck out."

"Go back to the nest and keep an eye on Hodge's prison," the boy said. "The Nabob and I have an engagement with Marx at Estelle's home."

Shrewd Simpson's eyes showed his astonishment.

"You trust him further than I do."

Felix laughed, and sprang into the cab, which was driven off rapidly.

At the end of ten minutes it drew up in front of the Nabob's residence, and its occupants sprang out.

As he alighted, Felix looked at a small watch which he took from his pocket.

"He will be here in eight minutes," he said.

CHAPTER XVII. THE HUNT ENDS.

It is not our intention to describe the meeting of Estelle and the Broad street banker, her guardian and friend.

Felix looked on with a smile of pleasure at the corners of his mouth, and with a gleam of solid satisfaction in his eyes.

"This is your work. I want to thank you!" exclaimed the beautiful girl, coming toward the boy spotter. "I have not forgotten the promise you gave me when I first sent for you."

"I guess I got there, didn't I?" laughed Felix. "When I discovered that Rogers Marx was at the bottom of the conspiracy, I knew I would win."

"Rogers Marx!" exclaimed the Nabob. "You have told me that he was to come here to-night."

"That is just what he is to do, and the time is up, too. You will go into yon room and come out only when Estelle touches one of the keys of the piano."

Mark Morey would have spoken again, when the tones of the bell startled all.

Morey sprang back into a room that adjoined the parlor, and he and the boy detective began to listen at the door. Estelle stood composed in the center of the parlor, ready to confront the man who had played so villainously for her hand.

In a little while the servant who had answered the ring entered the parlor with a letter for Estelle.

She opened the message and turned pale.

"Heavens!" he will never come!" she cried.

The boy spotter snatched the paper from her hand, and read one startling line:

"ESTELLE:—I am at the office—dead!"

"ROGERS MARX."

"He dared not come!" said Mark Morey, fiercely. "He must have suspected my presence here. Come, we will go to him, Felix Fox."

It was not long before a cab bore the couple toward Broad street, and Felix was at the Nabob's side when he sprang up the steps leading to the office.

"The door is unlocked," said Felix, grasping the knob, and the next moment he was on the inside.

The first thing the boy saw was an open safe, with some papers scattered about the floor. Then he noticed a man seated at the desk, his body bent forward as if he had fallen asleep in his chair.

Morey and the Boy Shadower reached his side at the same moment, and the hand of the broker millionaire fell heavily upon the man's shoulder.

"Marx, look up here!" said Morey, sternly. There was no reply, the man did not move.

"The message said he was dead, and dead he is!" said Felix.

In a moment the pair had raised the man's head, and something dropped from one of his hands to the floor.

"See here!" cried Felix, picking up a vial labeled "poison," and holding it up to Morey's gaze. "This is the last hand he played."

The broker turned away and looked into the partner's face. Death had set his seal on the villain's countenance.

"He took his choice between death and a visit to Estelle, and death won," Felix said. "Now, Mr. Morey, if you will examine the contents of your safe to see what this man has done since he began his game, I will go and look after Shrewd Simpson and Harris Hodge."

The Nabob went to work at once, and Felix left the room.

He made his way as rapidly as possible to

Baxter street, and halted before the notorious shop of Moses the Jew.

The hour was still early, but the establishment was closed, and silence had sealed its doors.

"What has happened?" ejaculated the boy spotter.

"A good deal," said a voice at his elbow. "The man who makes a cage, knows how to get out if it entraps him."

"What do you mean, Simpson?"

"Harris Hodge has escaped!"

The boy's first reply was a blank stare, then he caught Shrewd Simpson's arm and cried:

"I can't believe this! Did the woman let him out?"

"No. He forced the window above us, and actually dropped from sill to sill at the risk of his life. Half a dozen people saw the daring feat, but did not know who he was. He was gone when I got here, and I have been trying to strike his trail. I entered the house by means of the underground passage from Jacob's saloon. Its only occupant just now is the dead. Old Moses is up-stairs where you left him. His wife and his children have made off as if Satan and his legions were trooping behind them."

Felix Fox stood spellbound by this startling and unexpected revelation.

His hunt would not be complete without Harris Hodge.

"If he does not know that Marx is dead, he may visit the Broad street office," suddenly exclaimed Felix. "Come, Simpson, we must go back there."

The vicinity of the Jew's trap was soon deserted by the two detectives, and they were hastening toward the building in which Felix had left the Nabob. There are several squares between Moses's place and the broker's up-stairs office, and the journey was not made in a little while.

"Hark! something is going on up there," cried the boy spotter, as he reached the broad stair.

"There is a struggle of some kind," said Simpson.

Felix sprang up the steps, two at a time, and ran like a deer to the office. Shrewd Simpson was not able to keep up with the boy.

Felix did not hesitate to spring into the room when he had opened the door. The gas-light showed him two men writhing like grappled tigers on the floor close to a person who sat motionless in a desk chair.

"It is Harris Hodge!" cried the boy detective, and the next moment he threw himself upon the uppermost man.

Shrewd Simpson was not long adding himself to the affray, and Harris Hodge was jerked from the man he clutched, and confronted with a revolver that menaced his life.

The Nabob recovered slowly, for he was exhausted, which showed that Felix and Simpson had arrived in the nick of time.

Need we say that the morning papers presented the people with the solution of the mystery of the Nabob?

The account made very interesting reading and the New Yorkers, especially the wealthier ones, rejoiced over the destruction of the men who had planned and carried out the most startling abduction of modern times.

Everybody learned that the cab which took Mark Morey from his office on the day of the crime was driven by Larry Lolan and that the broker millionaire found Harris Hodge inside when he entered. He was instantly seized and choked insensible, and at a certain hour conveyed to the old Jew's where a cage had been prepared for him.

All this villainy had been prepared by Rogers Marx who intended by it to force Estelle to become his wife.

Felix Fox came in for a large share of the glory attached to the solving of the mystery, and he was not only paid the reward offered for Mark Morey but received other substantial recognition besides.

Harris Hodge was tried for the crime and received a lengthy sentence to Sing Sing where he now is, while Larry, his pal, and Marx his employer met the speedier fate of the evil-doer.

Clyde Caldwell, Estelle's lover, who was struck by a car, the same day of his arrival from Europe, had a speedy recovery, and in a short time made the beautiful girl his wife.

If Larry had not been molested there is no telling what might have befallen Caldwell, for the crook already had his eyes upon him.

Shrewd Simpson was not unwilling to put on new feathers over his share of the glory, and we will not deprive him of one.

A brother Jew stepped into possession of old Moses' shop after his death; but the Amazon and her family never came back.

THE END.

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